

Lady Merton

J. C. HEYWOOD

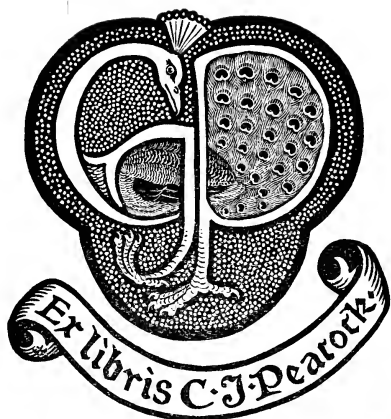


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who folds a leafe downey: diuel toaste browne
who makes marke or blotte y: diuel toaste hot
who ffealeth thise beke y: diuel shall cooke

Ellen Waterton 1895-

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LADY MERTON.

WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

HERODIAS.—Good to a surprise.—R. W. EMERSON.
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preciated as long as the English language
endures.—J. G. COGSWELL, LL.D.

LADY MERTON:

A TALE OF THE ETERNAL CITY.

BY

J. C. HEYWOOD,

Author of "Herodias," "Antonius," "Salome," "Sforza,"
"How will it end?" &c., &c.

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LADY MERTON.

XIII.

DURING these Christmas holidays, in consideration of his passionate love of music, Mary, after obtaining Sir Henry's approval, took Freddy with them to the opera, and she was more interested in watching the child than in observing what was going forward on the stage. He sat enraptured, his eyes fixed on the scene, absorbed, intense, motionless. It seemed almost as if his soul were ravished from his body, so still was this. Only the eyes told that his spirit was yet inside its habitation, pressing close behind them, and looking out with such craving, consuming, insatiable desire. For him what he saw on the stage was to all intents and purposes real—a new, wonderfully beautiful world, into which he had just been born, whose heavenly sounds and colours and forms and rhythm, all worked together harmoniously to intensify the supernatural life—life? Oh, yes, that was the actual life.

But the next morning, when she went to Freddy's room to see how he was, Lady Merton bitterly regretted having given the child so much pleasure.

Though it was yet early his eyes were wide open, and there was a slight contraction of his straight brows. He was lying very still, as he had evidently lain all night.

"Why, darling!" she exclaimed, "are you not sleeping?"

"No, mamma, dear, I have not been sleepy. I was listening to the music and seeing the beautiful things. Dear mamma, you were very good to take me with you, as you always are. I did not know there was anything so splendid and so sweet in the world. We will go again soon, won't we, mamma, darling?"

Mary felt that with her own hand she had kindled a fire in the casket which contained her most precious treasure—precious beyond estimation or expression—that she should evermore be powerless to quench, while it would go on consuming, consuming.

According to the plan formed, when they took Freddy from his school at Vevey, it was necessary to find for him a tutor. By making enquiries Sir Henry satisfied himself that, if they adhered to the intention of having his son instructed in the Italian and French languages, the only choice lay between some poor young Roman Catholic priest, or divinity student, and a teacher from the Royal University, who was an atheist. The objections to each were not evenly enough balanced to cause the Baronet much embarrassment.

"If," said he, "they turn the boy to infidelity, the perversion will not be so great as if he is made a Roman Catholic. We must elect the less evil."

And so an atheist became Freddy's tutor.

Before the middle of January Mr. Tellifer arrived

in Rome, and was welcomed with sincere pleasure, truly affectionate cordiality, by Lady Merton and her husband. He went to dine with them the next day informally, and to look at their apartment, which Mary was impatient for him to see. They had not been together half an hour, when Sir Henry, with inconceivable fatuity, introduced a topic that, more than all others, he ought to have banished from his house, and particularly from his wife's hearing.

"I noticed something to-day," said he, "which, I must say, surprised me ; yes, and made me feel very uncomfortable, it did, indeed."

"What was it ?"

"Walking on the Corso when the shower began, and seeing no cab, I hailed an omnibus. And there, inside, whom should I see but Don Foresti."

"And the sight of him made you uncomfortable ?"

"Yes, wait, for he was reading his breviary as industriously and as devoutly as ever a hypocritical mother's son of them. Heaven bless me ! There are things that I cannot abide, and one of them is hypocrisy. To see these priests going about in public conveyances showing off their piety by reading greasy books as if they had not time to do it at home—"

"That is just the case."

"Now, really, you know—"

"I thought once as you do, but I have looked into it. Each priest has to read the proper office in his breviary every day under pain of committing a mortal sin, and if he omits any essential part it is a mortal sin. Now, it may easily come about that the poor man, subject to a great variety of calls, can only avoid the mortal sin by reading his office when going

from place to place, and as he is generally very poor he finds himself better able to ride in a public than in a private conveyance."

"Well now, really, you know, I think that is a very stupid and superstitious regulation."

"This has nothing to do with our present question so long as it is the regulation, and the priests are too benighted to sign articles of religion and regulation, and disregard or act contrary to them. They have not the Protestant enlightenment which permits so many Anglican clergyman to subscribe the Thirty-nine Articles and then violate them, retaining their good standing and clear consciences."

"Oh, well, we are not talking about them, you know."

"I happen to have knowledge of Don Foresti's occupations to-day. At three o'clock this morning I called him up to visit one of my countrymen who is very ill at our hotel, and who has the misfortune to be a Roman Catholic. He remained there till six ; from that time till half-past seven he was saying his mass, and getting his morning coffee, then till nine he was hearing confessions ; from the time he was through with this till twelve he was working hard, trying to obtain admission into a convent for the daughter of Protestants who are unable to govern her"—Sir Henry and his wife exchanged a significant glance—"at one, in obedience to a summons, he had to present himself at the Vatican. When he left there it was time for him to keep an appointment with the Cardinal vicar ; then he found a call for him to carry the viaticum to a dying person——"

"Oh, well, well, that's enough, you know, that's

enough. I take it all back, so far as he is concerned ; and I am glad, yes, I am right glad to know he was not doing it for show, indeed I am. By the way, I have a friend in town whom I want you to see. I think he might astonish you with some facts that you *haven't* looked into," added Sir Henry, pushing back his chair from the table.

They went into the drawing-room where Mr. Pocus and Miss Letterly were waiting. After the ordinary salutations Mr. Telliifer, referring back to the Baronet's last remark, said :

"What is your friend?"

"He is high, very high ; a true Catholic, an Anglican Catholic."

"You mean that amphibious creature, a ritualistic parson, do you not?"

"Amphibious or hermaphrodite——"

"Why, my dear ! how disrespectful !" broke in Lady Merton. "You can't mean that !"

"No, certainly not, my love ; of course not. What do I mean? Something different, you know."

"Jelly-fish," threw out Mr. Pocus, wishing to help.

Sir Henry shook his head.

"Hermeneutic," suggested Miss Letterly.

"Oh, no," cried the Baronet impatiently. "What is it I want, my dear?"

"Heteroclites?"

"Ah ! that's it, that's it. Well, amphibious or heteroclites, as you will, a man can believe what they say."

"If a ritualistic parson, who wore the right kind and cut of clothes, and went through prescribed motions enough, to make him a primitive Christian,

especially if he were young and tender, and smelt of mint, anise, and cumin, should tell you that the garment he had on was only black when worn by a Roman Catholic priest, and white like snow as soon as he himself assumed it, you would believe him, and know it to be a fact, and that your own eyes had deceived you? Eh?"

"Certainly."

"Why?"

"Because I could be sure he would not lie except for love of truth, and to prevent deceit."

"There is nothing like having confidence in spiritual guides."

"Nothing, I assure you."

"And you have it. If they prevaricate, or distort the truth, or disguise it, or diminish it, or suppress it, or augment it, or in a self-sacrificing spirit go straight forward like little men, and cheerfully, even gaily, tell soft-voiced, pretty-sounding fibs for truth's sake——"

"How do you mean?" demanded Mr. Pocus, in a voice like the purr of a tiger.

"Saying, to keep you away from the Roman Church, that it is schismatic, corrupt, idolatrous, prevailed against by the gates of hell; that their church is catholic, has all the good that was ever in the old one, now subject to Satan and the Pope; that they can give you all the means of grace, all the sacraments as well and as truly as a Roman Catholic priest——"

"Well?"

"You know that in uttering all these things which are not so they have a most truthful motive."

"Of course I do, and it is a great help to faith ; it is, I assure you."

"I think the ritualists have their use in the Papal economy. They are not the church, but are sent to bear witness of the church—to be a voice crying in the wilderness, 'Prepare ye the way.'"

Mary had a strong wish to be presented at Court, not from any desire to show herself, or have the social credit of being noticed in these distinguished circles, but simply to see the gay and brilliant Court balls and pay a due tribute of respect to the sovereign under whose government and protection she and her husband were living. Their names were sent in by the British Ambassador, and after the presentation Lady Merton was unable to express all the reverent regard which she felt for the queen's young, beautiful, and gracious majesty, who quite won her heart by talking as if she had already known, and felt a friendly interest in, the lovely Englishwoman. Mary was sorry not to have been presented also to the king, whose manliness, generosity, chivalry, courage, his loyalty and his royalty, and, above all, his faithful determination liberally and truly to discharge the duties of a constitutional monarch, made her as desirous as was Sir Henry to do him homage.

But all the gaiety, pleasures, and adulations satisfying ambition, of society, which was uncommonly brilliant that winter, could not draw from Lady Merton's heart a lurking fear, hugged and nourished by her enfolding, acute, and intuitive sympathies. Freddy's cheek's had lost the colour which bloomed on them at Christmas, and in going it seemed to have taken more than itself. His eyes had grown larger

and clearer, and that earnest, far look had become more remarkable and persistent. He was always busy, so busy ; as though he had certain tasks to accomplish, and feared that the time would barely suffice. He applied himself to study with an intensity of eagerness which greatly pleased Sir Henry and his tutor, but which increased Lady Merton's vague apprehensions. And for his recreation he did not amuse himself like other children, but constructed operas and ballets, making and costuming the tiny puppets, and arranging wires and mechanisms till the mimicry was remarkable. His head was filled with a fantastic and beautiful world in which colour, form, sound, and motion combined in exquisite harmony, as he had perceived them on the stage. For music he used airs from the opera which, though heard but once, he had caught and remembered, together with melodies from his own brain that generated them spontaneously, whence they came like water bubbling from its source. By an ingenious combination of reeds and slips of paper he had made an instrument that varied the tones of his voice for the orchestra, while that clear, sweet, penetrating organ, unobstructed, served for solos and choruses. From time to time, with his little theatre, he gave exhibitions which were the marvel of all intimate friends of the family.

Mary tried to have him take more exercise ; invited him to walk with her, and overcame his disinclination. Then she perceived that by imperceptible gradations his step was losing its elasticity ; and not only this, but that her pace must be reduced in order that he might keep by her side.

“Do I walk too fast, dear ?” she would ask.

"A little," he would answer, with a smile.

"Are you not feeling well, darling?"

"Oh, yes, I am only tired."

But rest seemed to increase rather than diminish this weariness. Often he would excuse himself from walking, saying he felt too much fatigue, and if he yielded to urging and went, the exercise was so plainly a painful exertion for him that Mary ceased to insist.

Don Foresti noted this progressive change in Freddy and often he might have been remarked to turn his eyes, filled with compassionate solicitude, from the child to Lady Merton, when he was observed by neither, as if his heart already felt its powerlessness to protect and preserve this tender and sweet relation. Even Sir Henry noticed at length that his boy was not becoming robust as he desired, and as it was fitting that a young Englishman should be, and proposed, yet with no thought of being separated again from his darling, to put him in a boys' school somewhere, perhaps in England, to get rough knocks and be hardened. He was, and had been, too much with women, was too womanish, and growing up feeble as a woman.

One day Freddy's want of stamina and vigour was mentioned to a friendly English doctor then in Rome on a visit, who unprofessionally gave his advice, that is without any thorough or even formal examination of the patient. He said the boy was only suffering from imperfect digestion and insufficient nutrition, and that he must be fed with strong food and stimulants.

Mr. Teller had resumed his habit, coming to tell Sir Henry and Lady Merton of any passing event or opportunity for seeing something interesting. He

proposed that they should visit the lower church of S. Clemente mentioned by S. Jerome in 392, which would that day be illuminated. He said it was almost entirely destroyed when Robert Guiscard entered Rome in 1084, and on its ruins Paschal IV. erected the present one in 1108, incorporating into it all available parts of the original, such as the choir and the ambos. He told them that St. Clement was the third successor of St. Peter, and the one whose name, according to St. Paul (Philip. iv. 3), was "in the book of life," that the church now belonged to the Irish Dominicans; that the lower church, through the enterprise of their Prior Mulhooly, had since 1858 been excavated, and that it contained frescoes still in very good condition, some of which, as De Rossi thinks, date from the fifth century.

Yes, certainly, Mary would be delighted to go, and Sir Henry, like that other Mary's little lamb, would be delighted to go with her.

As they were studying the antique paintings, in which Lady Merton was deeply interested, the friars came down from the upper church in a procession, chanting.

"What are they saying?" asked Mary.

"It is doubtful if they themselves know," replied her husband, "some formula of superstition."

"In what they chant is a good part of your Litany," said Mr. Teller. "They call it the Litany of the Saints."

"Then they are now worshipping the saints? How very curious. I am so very glad we came," and Sir Henry really looked pleased and animated. No constable ever saw with greater joy a suspected thief,

whom he was trying to make guilty, actually purloining a pullet.

"They are praising God in His saints, as the Psalmist told them to do."

"But," exclaimed Lady Merton, "they are praying to them! I hear their names. I thought you said it was the better part of the Anglican Litany. Anglicans do not address the saints."

"Because they do not believe in the 'communion of saints.' The Anglican Litany may be said, indeed, to have been entirely taken from this Litany and other parts of Roman Catholic worship."

"But the prayers to the saints——"

"Are just such prayers as St. Paul made to the brethren, or as are constantly made by good people nowadays who ask the prayers of the Church or of individuals. Catholics believe—as you do not—in the actual existence of the Church and brethren triumphant, and that they are in communion with it and them, and may profit by its and their prayers, just as you suppose you may be benefited by the prayers of your Church militant, or of your pastor, that is all; only they think the prayers of sinless souls in heaven are more effective than those of sinners on earth."

"Yes, but it is plainly said that Jesus Christ is the one Mediator."

"Very well, so Roman Catholics say and believe. But it is at least implied that we should procure His mediation. To do this Catholics ask the saints, and especially the Mother of Jesus Christ, to obtain it for them, being humble enough to believe that the requests of the Mother of God, for instance——"

“What a shocking expression! I think it is fearful to say that.”

“If Jesus Christ was God, equal to the Father, the same as the Father, and the Virgin Mary was his Mother, how is it possible to speak of her as anything less than the Mother of God? That title was formally given to her because heretics denied the union of the divine and human natures in Christ, and thus that the divinity of Him came from her womb with the humanity. It was a title given to elevate the man Jesus and not Mary; to make Him acknowledged God. Not only are we not forbidden the use of intercession to obtain from Christ what we desire, but we have precedents which you will hardly discredit. The centurion who sent unto Him the elders of the Jews, because he ‘thought himself unworthy,’ was not re-proved for using these intercessors, but commended for faith above any in Israel. Job’s friends were to be forgiven only through Job’s prayers, according to the word of the Hearer of Prayer. By the same direction Abimelech should live and not die if Abraham prayed for him. And John says: ‘He that knoweth his brother to sin a sin which is not unto death, let him ask and life shall be given him who sinneth not unto death.’ People have a way of talking about prayers to the saints as though that were all of Roman Catholicism, whereas it is only the fringe. Catholics may besiege the throne of Grace with the Hosts of Heaven as auxiliaries, while Protestants must go at it alone, or with only earthly help. But Sir Henry is getting impatient.”

The Baronet had indeed withdrawn from the conversation, and, having gazed at the old frescoes over

and over again, began really to show signs of weariness.

"To think," said Mary, as they drew near her husband, trying to enlist his attention, "that fifteen hundred years ago Christian worship was held in this very place, within these very walls!"

"Yes," returned Mr. Tellifer, "and in the same form."

"Oh, that I entirely doubt." Sir Henry spoke positively.

"I can prove it to you."

"How?"

"From the Bible."

"Well, really now——"

"Yes, from Revelation."

"You undertake a great deal, you do, indeed, you know."

"I have looked into it. On one Lord's day John saw a personage on a throne, as a bishop sits with his ornaments, and about the throne four and twenty elders seated, as priests and deacons sit about the bishop. And they had on white robes and crowns, priests' vestments and head-coverings. There were lamps, as in John's time lamps, but now candles, burning, and a sea of glass, as a baptismal font, and a book. In the midst of the priests was a Lamb *as it were slain*, that is, a victim mystically slain and offered, to which were rendered divine honours, as they are to the Eucharistic victim, and there was singing and chanting, and the four and twenty elders worshipped, as do priests, the personage or pontiff on the throne and the Lamb, the offered victim, just as in the mass, where divinity itself is at the same time

presiding pontiff and victim, and as such adored by the worshipping priests. And there was an altar, which was like a tomb, for under it were the souls of martyrs, like that altar, if St. Clement was buried under it, as I believe he was ; or like the altars in the Catacombs which were the tops of tombs, and like the altars in the churches, with bodies and relics of martyrs under them. And there was a censer and much incense that should be offered with the prayers of all the saints. By the way, for whom, or for what were the saints praying? No need to pray for themselves."

"Where is all that?"

"That it was seen on a Sunday, in the first chapter. The rest you may find in the fourth, fifth, sixth, and eighth chapters. Now, St. John either transferred to heaven the ceremonial as it existed in the Church, which is, to me, most probable, or that which he saw in heaven was adopted by the Church. An informal, colourless worship, so simple as to have no ceremonial, does not please Him to whom all worship is due as well, so far as I can find out. The manner of Jewish culte was dictated by Himself, and what a definite and splendid ceremonial it had! God did not change Himself or His tastes, if I may so speak without offence, when He gave the new dispensation. He made types and shadows real, that was all, and Christ followed and performed all the ceremonial of the old law, which he came to fulfil, not to destroy or alter."

"Come, my dear," said Sir Henry. "If we stay here a little longer, Mr. Teller will prove that saint-worship and image-worship, and kissing the

Pope's great toe, was all divinely dictated and in so many words."

The friars had finished their devotions and gone to the upper church, and most of the people had followed them. The Baronet was really tired ; they had seen all that there was to see, and heard many things which Mary would ponder in her heart, spite of her intelligence and enlightenment, and which she did ponder during their evening drive.

XIV.

IN Freddy's case two great antagonists opposed themselves to the treatment prescribed by the friendly doctor—namely, the patient's appetite and stomach. Both rebelled against it. Nevertheless, with all the blind faith reposed in whatever any one of the faculty may say, Sir Henry and Lady Merton, impelled by the solicitude of tenderest affection, went on tormenting poor dear Freddy's digestive organs by all sorts of conceivable experiments, now with this and now with that kind of strong food and strong drink.

A few days after the visit to S. Clemente Mr. Teller met, at Sir Henry's table, the ritualistic champion, Rev. Mr. Tiddles, of whom the Baronet had not long before spoken. Evidently he had been told of the American's partiality to Romanism, for, referring to the fact as they entered the drawing-room, he deferentially enquired of that gentleman what books he had read, and how he had been led to form such a preference.

"The books," replied Mr. Teller, "which I have read with particular regard to this question are—first, and above all, the Bible; second, Dr. Littledale's 'Plain Reasons'; third, Cardinal Newman's 'Theory of Development,' and fourth, Father Ryder's 'Reply to Littledale's Plain Reasons.'"

"Is it possible you found anything favourable to Roman Catholics in the Bible?"

"So much that I consider them the only Bible-Christians."

"But how could Dr. Littledale's book have convinced you of exactly the opposite to its teachings?"

"Because his shocking and most un-Christian want of candour and honesty was so obvious, and his charges so manifestly fictitious that the truth seemed to be exactly opposite to what he said, and that tempted me to look into it."

"And the result?"

"Expressed all too delicately by Father Ryder in his preface: 'All I intend to prove is that Dr. Littledale has repeatedly asserted the thing that is not, with the evidence that it is not staring him in the face, and in cases, too, involving the gravest imputations upon the character of an adversary.'"

"I am surprised that——"

"Look here. I am an American. We are brought up, especially in the part of the country where I was raised, to consider lying possible only to a slave, and that slave a negro. Perhaps this is why the name of that Littledale is an offence in my nostrils. With us many an unregenerate sinner has rendered a violent death inevitable as fate by giving another unregenerate sinner the lie. Yet that impossible vice seems so much a matter of course, with this Christian controversialist, that he is cheerfully and constantly accusing the most venerable institution on earth of wilful and conscious deceit. And so much is he used to it, so much does it enter into his life that he, apparently with the pleasure of a man who enjoys flattery, sees

himself publicly branded as a falsifier, a libeller, a bearer of false witness, and a liar."

"I think myself," said Mr. Tiddles mildly, "that perhaps Dr. Littledale goes rather too far. There are some very good and honest Roman Catholics."

"Do you admit that?" demanded Sir Henry, surprised.

"I must. The Roman Catholic is a Church, unfortunately in schism."

"Please tell me from what the Roman Church separated—what ecclesiastical allegiance it renounced so as to become schismatic. Do you not know the meaning of common English words which you use, and yet offer yourself as an interpreter of recondite and awful mysteries?"

"Well—ah—she is—ah—nevertheless schismatic. But we should not hesitate to hold communion with her if she would give up all claims to supremacy herself, acknowledge our supremacy, and make our Queen the supreme spiritual head of the united Churches."

"Don't you think that would be letting up on her rather too easily?" asked Mr. Teller, with a serious face.

"Well, no," answered Mr. Tiddles. "We must use Christian charity, you know. To be sure we should still consider that she had a surplussage of sacraments, and of some other things. But we have learned toleration in our own Church, and to esteem opposite beliefs no bar to fellowship, and not to insist on flat uniformity. Besides, it is a glorious idea, and my heart warms with the thought of bringing that Church, respectable in spite of its errors and corruptions, with

its millions of members, its magnificent temples and its tens of millions of pounds sterling, under the shelter of our wing, and under our control."

"According to the New Testament, which you profess to believe, Jesus Christ founded a Church and promised to be with it always ; that His Spirit should guide it into all truth, and that nothing, not even the gates of hell, should prevail against it. History establishes the unquestionable fact that the Roman Catholic Church is the continuation of, in effect, the Church then founded. According to you, and all Protestants, Jesus Christ at some time broke His promises. And this you and they prove by the fact that the Church has not been guided, instructed, and governed as you and they think it should have been, bringing Jesus Christ and His Spirit to the bar of your judgment and condemning them."

"The Church of the Reformers——"

"Was a new Church, not a reformed one. To take a few of the columns from an old temple and work them into a new structure is not to repair the old one. They reformed, or they did not reform, themselves by leaving the Roman Communion, but they did not reform any Church. They built new ones, according to their taste ; not constructed by rules divinely given, like the Jewish Tabernacle."

"I think myself," softly admitted Mr. Tiddles, "with Littledale, that the Reformers were ruffians."

"Does he say that?" demanded Sir Henry almost fiercely.

"Certainly," replied Mr. Teller, "when not trying to keep people from joining the Church of Rome. And he has said, in regard to facts brought to light

by recent historical investigations, that 'every fresh find establishes more clearly the utter scoundrelism of the Reformers.'"

"Well, now, you know, I wouldn't have believed it. He must be an uncommonly flexible Christian," said the Baronet.

"I like a certain amount of flexibility, so much as is needful in order to adapt one's self to circumstances, and to diversities of creed," gently remarked Mr. Tiddles.

"I call that amphibious—" began Mr. Tellifer.

"Amphibious or double-tongued, I call it being all things to all men, according to the injunction," broke in Sir Henry.

Now this talk, and others like it, would have been harmless enough if Mary, unfortunately, had not been present. As she seldom took part it never occurred to her husband that she could be especially interested in listening; and above all, that in listening there might be for her great danger. If she spoke little, she thought much. An argument that Mr. Tellifer had once used, in particular, caused her frequent reflection.

"If," he had said, "as we sit here, a personage should enter and say: 'I am a messenger from the Most High, sent to announce the true Christian Doctrine' the obvious reply would be: 'Show us your credentials. If you are such messenger, we accept as truth anything you may declare, however mysterious or impossible it may appear.' And this the Roman Catholic would say. The Protestant would answer: 'Make your announcement, and we will judge by that whether you are what you claim to be.' Now, to my

mind, for I have looked into it, speaking as a believer might, the Roman Catholic Church is such a messenger. Founded by Jesus Christ, receiving from Him through His apostles the deposit of faith in its original purity, kept from corrupting or losing it by His constant presence according to His promise, and taught all supplemental truth by His Spirit,—if I believed in Him and believed Him, I must believe that He cannot lie, nor break His promises, and, consequently, that the Roman Catholic Church holds to-day the true Christian Doctrine.”

“How, then” he was asked, “do you account for so many bad popes, and bad priests, and bad men in the Catholic Church?”

“Just as I account for Judas among the twelve apostles; and just as I account for the tares which the devil sowed in the night.”

“And the worst is they let them stay in the Church.”

“Because the Owner of the field said: ‘Let both grow together until the harvest.’ But I never could see the reasonableness, even in religion, of taking the lives and characters of persons violating and living contrary to a doctrine as exponents of that doctrine, either Catholic or Protestant, any more than it would be to accept the biography of a law-breaker as evidence of the beneficent effects of laws observed.”

“But all these popes were infallible.”

“Only when they decided questions pertaining exclusively to faith and doctrine, that is, when the spiritual office spoke.”

“How do you account for that?”

“By Christ’s promise to be with, preserve, and teach

all truth to His church, and just as I account for the fact that the Scribes and Pharisees taught truly because they sat in Moses' seat, and for the fact that Caiaphas 'spake not of himself: but being high priest that year he prophesied'; and for the Master's injunction regarding those in Moses' seat, 'All, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not after their works.' "

Poor Mary, as she reflected on all this, began to feel a vague terror. It seemed to her dimly as though an immense, invisible monster, whose huge shape her imagination could not see, yet none the less actual because unperceived and undefined, were fascinating her with great, soft, lovely eyes, in spite of all she could do. Fascinating, fascinating, drawing her helpless as in a nightmare, always nearer, nearer to his half-open mouth, lying so still, feeling no anxiety, sure of her, patient, waiting till she should herself fall into his throat.

A grand ball was to be given by the Princess of Astura in honour of the heir to a crown in the north of Europe, then passing a few weeks in Rome, and all the old native papal society was interested. Such balls had been very rare in that society since "the Italians came in" through the breached wall at Porta Pia in the year 1870. The young people, passionately fond of dancing, had been offered very few opportunities to indulge in that graceful pastime. But this was to be a real ball in the ball-room of the palace, with orchestra and all the appurtenances. Everybody knew that the Astura palace contained superb saloons and a magnificent hall for dancing. It was familiar knowledge, also, that the Prince of Astura held a most

high and honourable charge at the Vatican Court, and consequently that no "white" or even "grey" person could expect to be invited. Foreigners were considered to have no colour, or at most only tints entirely neutral. The company, therefore, would be composed of "black" Romans and strangers from the "colonies," or sojourning for a few weeks or months in the eternal city. Sir Henry and Lady Merton with Mr. Tellifer were among those of the English-speaking "colony" who were fortunate enough to receive invitations.

Mary was delighted. She had a great desire to see the "Old Roman" society in one of its assemblies, and took extra pains to honour the occasion. Her toilette was exquisite and set off her wonderful beauty to the best advantage. Sir Henry and herself entered the palace with the very highest tide of guests.

"Well, now, this is really princely, you know, it really is," remarked the Baronet, moving slowly, looking round and above him, as they walked through the stately ante-rooms into the suite of splendid saloons flooded with soft light from hundreds of wax candles.

Most of the families registered in the Golden Book were more or less largely represented. There were princes, dukes, marquesses of the "Baldichino," plain marquesses with their consorts, and counts with countesses in quantities, ancient and honorable. There were lineal descendants of Catholic sovereigns lately reigning, and members of royal families, royal no longer. There were the ambassadors and ministers accredited to the Holy See, with their wives, secretaries, and attachés. There were a few untitled

Italians and foreigners of distinction, with representatives of nobility from almost every country in Europe, and there was the royal Scandinavian prince and his suite. With this handsome and gallant youth Lady Merton had the honour of dancing before she had been half an hour in the ball-room. But, and this surprised her, there were no prelates, no ecclesiastics of any grade to be seen.

Mary thought that, generally, the ladies were exceedingly well dressed, the display of family jewels dazzling, and she greatly admired the courtliness and ease of manner which prevailed universally. To Mr. Tellifer, who, seeing her for a moment free, approached, she spoke of the many beautiful women present, having an especial liking for the Italian, or Roman, style of loveliness.

"I am glad to see that they appreciate you," he replied. "You are by far the most superbly beautiful, the divinest creature in the room, or in the world. There," he continued, "I have been suffering to say something like that to you ever since we first met, as a truth and a just tribute, but only in the rarefied air of a ball-room could it be let off with safety, and I knew it. Now I feel better. Can I do anything for you?"

Lady Merton's blush and the softening of her glorious eyes, dark bowls of spiritual intoxication, did not confess half the pleasure that thrilled her heart on hearing this speech. She presently answered the question.

"Yes; tell me, please, why no prelates are here."

Because they are generous enough to give you ladies a chance to show your fair throats and white shoulders."

"How do you mean?"

"It would be contrary to etiquette for ladies to wear low-necked gowns at a reception where there are prelates. Besides, this is a dancing party, and priests never go where there is dancing."

At this moment a gentleman advanced and claimed Mary's hand for the waltz, and Sir Henry joined Mr. Tellifer.

"A very pretty ball," remarked the Baronet, "a very pretty ball; good taste, yes, it must be admitted, you know, these Papists have good taste. Anything of a ceremonial kind they do uncommonly well, they do, indeed, you know. Have you been presented to his royal highness?"

"I? No, why should I?"

"For the pleasure and the honour."

"For the honour,—perhaps; but for the pleasure,—I should smile! I shall probably never see him again; he will not make me acquainted with himself, nor become acquainted with me; will not remember my name nor my face twelve hours, if he does even for one hour. Where is the pleasure of being named and of bowing to him? I don't see it."

"Well, you are unlike a good many of your people, you know."

"Am I? How?"

"They would be entranced at the thought of a probable presentation to royalty."

"Some, possibly. We have all kinds of people."

"In London I once saw some Americans entertaining royalty, really entertaining it, you know; and bless my soul, if they didn't appear to be fainting for a chance to unloose its shoe-latchets, for the honour of

it, they did, upon my word. And then they spoiled it all."

"How?"

"Sat down in its presence uninvited; did really, you know."

"Couldn't sit down in its presence?"

"Certainly not, unless commanded."

"Not in their own house?"

"Of course not."

"Nor their other guests, either?"

"None of them."

"And they were happy?"

"Enchanted."

"Glad they came?"

"Delighted. Wouldn't you be?"

"And not able to sit down. Well, no, I think not. I had as lief be a cherub—or have a boil." But these last words Mr. Teller said softly to himself, as he turned to greet an acquaintance.

In a pause of the waltz Mary encountered the fixed gaze of a man standing opposite to her. A thrill of fear and repulsion shot through her without any apparent reason. She vainly tried to recollect if she had ever seen this person before, and who he was, for, somehow, his countenance did not seem altogether unknown. He was rather distinguished in appearance, standing quite alone. But there was a look in his cold, steel-gray eyes that made her spirit shrink, and the effect of his reddish moustache, with its ends pointing upwards, and his hooked nose, was such that a thought of the devil in visible form flashed through her; at which she smiled a moment afterwards. She asked her partner who that remarkable-looking per-

son might be, but he could not tell. Determined, if possible, to know, and thus perhaps find an explanation of the most disagreeable impression produced on her by his presence, when the dance was ended she took her husband's arm, and sought through the saloons for a sight of the stranger, but he had vanished.

Sir Henry and Lady Merton left the ball at a comparatively early hour. She had passed an evening, or, rather, the middle part of a night, in unalloyed enjoyment, except for the incident of the, to her, mysterious presence of that person. The delicate and powerful incense which she had breathed produced an unconscious intoxication, followed by no depressing reaction; and the next day she went over in memory all the occurrences of the night with renewed pleasure, troubled only by one recollection, and that a persistent one, the gaze and appearance of that man.

In spite of everything, however, the subject that had occupied her mind so much the last few days would intrude itself, and she seemed to hear the voice of that indefatigable Mr. Telfer, with his admiration of the Roman Church as a system, a system, as he said, perfectly logical if the Bible be admitted as its premises, founded on all of Revelation, and not on a text here and a text there. With his love of honest, straightforward reasoning and hatred of its opposite she entirely sympathised. And what must he do but increase her trouble, a day or two later, when they were sitting together, by saying:

"As a safe speculation I would become a Roman Catholic if it were possible for me to be anything."

"How so?" Why could not she let the remark drop, and the subject?

"Because, the whole final accounting must be made to Jesus Christ. Now, by His promises to the Apostles He endorsed the Church which they built on His foundation, giving it an eternal credit. On the strength of that credit so given if I should deposit in it and take its paper—that is, if I should join it, obey it, and receive its sacraments, when my turn should come at the last day, if I could hand in a true statement certified to that effect, I reckon my account would be passed without a question."

"That is a business way of looking at it."

"Well, if there *is* anything in it at all, this is the most important business in which a man can engage, infinitely. And for speaking in that way I have a good precedent. He spoke of laying up treasure in heaven."

"Cannot Protestants so lay up treasure?"

"Some Protestants can and do undoubtedly, who live according to the best light they can get in good faith—I talk now as a theologian. But I never could have made any such deposits as a Protestant. It would have been impossible for me to have the necessary good faith in anything so utterly illogical, unreasonable, and changeable."

About a week after the Astura ball Lady Merton had the desired opportunity of seeing together socially a large number of prelates. It was at a grand reception, which the Spanish Ambassador to the Pope gave at the Spanish palace in the Piazza di Spagna, for one of his compatriots who had just received a Cardinal's hat. The broad stairs, brilliantly lighted, were made

more splendid by lackeys in rich liveries who stood on the steps at each side with wax torches. Just ahead of Sir Henry's carriage a prince of the Church alighted at the foot of the stairs, and Mary with great interest watched the ceremonial of conducting him to the room in which the Ambassador received his guests. Two lackeys with torches took their places, one on either side of this dignitary, and accompanied him up the stairs and through the long anterooms. There he was received by a master of ceremony, and guided to the Ambassador. Lady Merton noticed, later, that the same etiquette was observed when a cardinal or chief of a diplomatic mission departed.

The most distinguished prelates in Rome, the highest in rank at the Vatican, after the Pope, were here; the cardinal-secretary of state, always amiable and charming; the cardinal-vicar, with his bright, smiling eyes and his perfectly balanced head; the chiefs of congregations, and so forth and so forth. The members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Pope were present, wearing all their decorations; the greatest ladies of the Eternal City, in their richest costumes, conspicuous among whom was the very handsome princess, with her coronet of magnificent pearls, whose mother had sat on the Spanish throne; and many distinguished foreigners, some of whom looked, and probably felt, like exotics.

Suddenly Lady Merton met the gaze which had so much troubled her at the Astura ball. This time also the man, or the personage, was entirely alone, as if isolated; and again a most painful shock of repulsion was felt by Mary. She noticed, as she had not before, a large scar beginning at the left corner of his

mouth and running the whole width of his cheek to a point under his ear. Prince X., on whose arm she was at the moment, had never seen the person. It seemed as though nobody had, for Lady Merton asked of many acquaintances the information sought. Finally one of her countrymen replied that the gentleman in question, as he had been told, was an Englishman on his way from India to England. His name had been forgotten, but he was said to be immensely rich. Brass was taking him about, which was no recommendation, for Brass was always pushing himself on some stranger whom he took for a lion. This knowledge gave Mary no help in solving the mystery of that half-recollection of the man, and the distress produced by his look ; an effect which did not wear off for days. As on the other evening he disappeared early, and Lady Merton tried to divert her thoughts and forget all about him by again observing the personages of great distinction with whom the ample saloons and the throne-room were filled, and who presented a very brilliant spectacle. It had, to a mind and imagination like Mary's, much seductive power. She fancied, or felt, that there was about these Catholic social assemblies an atmosphere, or a subtle something in the atmosphere, which gave them an especial dignity, elegance, and charm ; but what it was she could not define, and spoke of it afterwards to Mr. Teller.

"I believe it is their religion," said he. "I sometimes feel its attraction myself. Theirs *is* a religion. I assure you that, in my country, a great many, particularly of the youngish people, would be faithful, devout, practising Christians if they could know what

Catholicism really is, who are now utterly irreligious, or are becoming infidels in the same way that I did."

"How was that?"

"From the time when I began to observe and reason I noticed the divergences of different Protestant sects, sometimes between different parties of the same sect. In vain I asked one after another: 'Which of you is positively right? There cannot be more than one straight gate and one narrow way to the one place. Which of you certainly opens that gate and leads in that way?'"

"And the answer?"

"Nothing categorical, definite, sure. Logically and plainly one had just as much authority as another; and I had only to sum up what of so-called revelation was practically rejected by each through the whole list to perceive that among them they left very little undisputedly admitted."

"I have lately felt that myself."

"Besides, I soon learned that, with many of them, what was good doctrine, a belief in which was necessary to salvation, one hundred, fifty, or even twenty years ago, was bad doctrine now, and *vice versa*."

"I have remarked that."

"And I asked myself what confidence could be felt in a guide who one day sets out bravely on one road, asserting most positively that it certainly leads the shortest and only way to the place at which I wish at the cost of all things to arrive; and the next day branches off into another, or retraces his steps to find a different route, admitting that he was wrong the day before."

“It is disheartening, truly.”

“Well, as the preachers and people whose business it was did not seem to know anything positively about the matter, or to have any fixed inflexible rules, I couldn't take stock in any of their companies. What I was able to demonstrate by the use of my senses and my reasoning powers I would believe ; as for everything else, I would not actively and aggressively disbelieve, only deny it as not proven, and say I didn't know.”

XV.

LENT drew near. It was the evening of the second and last Court ball of the season. Sir Henry and Lady Merton were there. She did not dance, preferring, surrounded by a brilliant group of followers, to walk through the magnificent rooms, observe their decorations, and especially the marvellous wealth of flowers, where mirrors and crystal chandeliers multiplied almost infinitely the real and reflected lights.

Suddenly the thought of Freddy flashed through her mind, and at the same moment an unaccountable pang shot across her heart. She had an instant presentiment that it was ill with the child, whom she had bidden good-night in his bed the last thing before leaving home. He had particularly wished to see her when fully enrobed, and his evident pleasure, as he scrutinized and praised her dress, was to her the most grateful of the many compliments received. Begging the Ambassador, on whose arm she was, to find and leave her with Sir Henry, they immediately and quietly left the palace; the Baronet anxiously wondering what could have moved his wife, who to his enquiries only answered that she would tell him in the carriage. She was all the more troubled, remembering how that very afternoon, speaking with Don Foresti

in regard to the boy, she had said that perhaps they ought to call in a physician.

"And the best," he had replied, significantly. —

But they thought it wise to wait till the next day and see if he were not better.

As soon as Mary entered the house, she went directly to Freddy's room, and found him with the signal fires of fever in each cheek, his pulse very quick, his flesh hot, while the disordered state of his hair and the bed testified to his restlessness.

"Freddy darling," she cried, "are you ill?"

"No, dear mamma, no; only I couldn't sleep. I was thinking of you."

Tears came to her eyes as she put her arms around and kissed him tenderly, feeling, as he returned the embrace, how parched and hot were his lips. No time was lost in summoning Dr. Addle. Of course, they could trust none but an Englishman in a case of so much import. He declined to define the malady at once—it might be this and it might be that; but he feared it was the Roman fever. In a day or two he should be able to speak more precisely. Was there danger? No, at present, certainly not.

From that moment Mary took her place in the sick-room, and did not leave it. The bare possibility that their darling had been attacked by the "Roman fever" smote her and Sir Henry with the most anxious fears, and caused the saddest forebodings. Bitterly did they reproach themselves for having exposed this precious young life to the fatal malady.

Freddy lay quiet when his mamma was by him, regarding, with that strangely earnest look, all who came near, only his eyes, notwithstanding their unusual

brightness, had in them, deeper than ever, that something like the shadow of a great sorrow. He said nothing unless spoken to, uttering no complaint, and taking prescribed remedies with the greatest docility.

The second day after he was called in the doctor positively declared the disease to be indeed "Roman fever," but he thought in this particular case it had assumed a mild form. In fact, the fever, of whatever kind it was, or from whatever cause, was low and slow. The patient seemed to suffer no acute pain, but was oppressed by excessive languor. The medicine-man, who himself had "Roman fever on the brain," continued the treatment which he conceived suited to that supposed distemper, and ingeniously explained all symptoms in a way to make them support his foregone conclusion.

Days and nights went on with no very perceptible difference in the patient's condition, except that he gradually grew weaker, the rose spots on his cheeks and his eyes brighter, and at length Mary, worn out with care, anxiety, and want of sleep, was constrained to share her labours with a nurse. This nurse was a French sister of the "Bon Secours." She learned from Lady Merton all that she could in regard to the case, did not appear satisfied, asked if Freddy had been seen by any other physician, suggested the expediency of consulting a Roman, who, if the disease were really peculiar to Rome, ought to understand its treatment better than could a foreigner, and finally prevailed on Sir Henry to ask for a consultation and to call in for that purpose Professor Bacillo, a native doctor who had a high reputation throughout Italy. After being together alone some minutes the two

physicians came into the room where Sir Henry and Mary were anxiously waiting. "We find," said the Roman, "after a careful examination of the case, that it is not one of so-called Roman fever."

Dr. Addle looked crestfallen, whether because compelled to admit that he had been persistently in the wrong, or because he must lose the satisfaction of having a patient die of "Roman fever," was not clear.

Dr. Bacillo furthermore declared that it was not a case of any kind of fever. (This fact, so far as it went, was very lucky for the sick child. Had his disease been typhoid fever he would have been killed by the treatment to which he had been subjected.*)

Sir Henry and Lady Merton's faces brightened as they heard the opinion of Professor Bacillo, so calmly and confidently expressed. But the sense of relief was momentary. After a few moments' silence the doctor went on very gently :

"The patient is suffering from *tuberculosis*"—a thrill of anguish passed through father and mother.—
"Most probably they will develop in the brain."

* Typhoid, when it attacks a visitor in Rome, is more likely to be fatal than elsewhere, for these reasons : In the first place the patient, not understanding well the language of the country, and having immovable faith in the incompetency of Italian physicians, calls in some doctor of his own nationality if possible. When, as is often the case, this doctor himself is comparatively a stranger in the city, he is predisposed to take any feverish symptoms as indications of "Roman fever," of which his books have taught him nothing, not even its name, and this predisposition colours and distorts all that he sees. He proceeds to treat the sick person as he supposes he or she ought to be treated for "Roman fever" ; and this very treatment kills the patient whom the typhoid fever might have spared. Ask any respectable physician resident for years in Rome.

"Oh, my boy! my boy!" groaned the Baronet, clenching his hands together. Mary's blood rushed to her heart, she could not speak, her face was colourless and haggard, she almost fainted. Here was the realization of his fears of separation, of her intuitions, the explanation of that strange nervous intensity.

"Is there no hope?" Sir Henry's voice was very low, and seemed to come from his breast without the intervention of lips.

"None. If his brain remain free he may stay with you for some weeks, possibly months; but after his brain is affected, if it is, not so many days. All we can do is to make him comfortable as may be for the rest of the time, and this shall be done." The professor spoke softly and with an unmistakable accent of sympathy in his voice, yet his words smote two hearts like blows. "My dear Sir," he continued, addressing the Baronet, "try to bear up for the sake of this poor lady. And you, Madam, comfort yourself with the belief that this angel, so dear to you, has fulfilled, or is about fulfilling, his mission. That done he will go to the place whence he came, and there wait and pray for you."

Having said this very gently the Roman went out, followed by Dr. Addle, who shook hands with Sir Henry and Lady Merton, but attempted to utter no word of consolation.

Scarcely had the men of science retired when Mary abruptly left the room and in secret gave free course to the agony caused by this terrible revelation. The angelic child had found his way to her inmost heart, and she loved him with a passionate tenderness greater

than she might have felt for one, of a different character and disposition, that had been mysteriously formed of her own life-blood and fed upon her breast.

She had regained some degree of calmness when her husband sought her, and together, disguising their grief, and striving to appear cheerful, they went to Freddy's bedside.

"How do you feel now, darling?" asked Mary, bending over him.

"Better, thank you, dear mamma. I am better ; only I feel very tired."

"Can you not sleep, dear?"

"No. I am not sleepy ; only tired."

Lady Merton raised him, adjusted and smoothed his pillows, moved him to one side, where the sheets were cooler, and sat down by him. Sir Henry, who had silently looked on, turned and hastily left the room, unable longer to mask his emotions.

It seemed to be tacitly agreed that nothing should be said to the child about death, and particularly that no suspicion even should reach him as to his own, now so near. He continued to grow weaker, to fade daily. Yet to all questions as to how he felt his almost unvarying reply was, "better," and to Mary he would add, "Say I am better, mamma, dear."

Since Professor Bacillo's announcement Lady Merton had been so broken down that another sister was brought from the "Bon Secours" to relieve her mate. One of them spent the day and the other the night beside the suffering child—for his pains had increased and his breath was becoming shorter and more laboured—doing whatever skill, under the direction of gentlest charity which, sought not its

own,' could do to render his way to the dark river easier. These good sisters were pained, though possibly not surprised, that nothing was said to the dear boy about his danger, since it could not in any way be averted, and particularly that not one word of a religious nature was ever uttered in his presence, for fear of alarming him. Knowing that Sir Henry and his wife were not Catholics, they would not violate the trust reposed in themselves by speaking to their charge on the subject of religion without leave, and, after several consultations together, seeing that absolutely nothing was done for the welfare of the child's soul, they determined to speak frankly with the Baronet about the matter. He positively, and with some show of irritation, declared that his boy should not be troubled with such things at such a time, and that no clergyman should be called. Don Foresti, who had been their constant friend from the first, and who came daily to see or to enquire for the child, had received strict injunctions not to speak concerning the patient's spiritual interests. All that the good man could do, therefore, was to pray, and remember the dear young friend in his daily Mass.

Finally Sir Henry and his wife acceded to the insistence of the nuns so far as to request an Anglican clergyman, not connected with either the English or American Church in Rome, but one of the Baronet's friends, a most respectable gentleman of a fine old family, to read prayers for the sick. The respectable gentleman came in a very respectable manner, and entered the sufferer's chamber with proper dignity as representing the Establishment on this occasion, and, remembering also his own and his family's respect-

ability, he read the appointed service in a bold, rather loud, somewhat imperious voice, without any tremor or other sign of weakness. When the reading was finished, he looked slowly round at the company, as though to challenge, "If any man wishes to say that was not well done, according to the true spirit of the Establishment, and to the satisfaction of every loyal Churchman, I should like to see him." Then he took Freddy's hand, saying :

"Good-bye, my dear ; I hope you will very soon be quite well again."

Now, as a matter of fact, there was neither ground nor room for any such hope, of which he was well assured.

The whole performance grated harshly in Mary's very heart, and she knew it must have been most painful to the darling boy, who had said never a word, except a feeble "Thank you," in reply to the clergyman's farewell greeting.

Next day the patient was plainly much worse, "all in consequence of disturbing his mind by that damned religion," growled the Baronet, with manifest irritation. And this was perhaps true, though not according to his meaning. Freddy was unusually still, unwontedly cast down, yet persisted in trying to persuade his mamma that he was better. Suddenly, after a long silence, he said :

"If Father Foresti comes to ask after me to-day, I want to see him. Will you please bring him here, mamma ?"

"Certainly, my darling."

"Will you bring him alone and leave him with me ? Please do."

"Yes, dear, gladly, if that will give you any pleasure. Why do you wish it?"

Freddy did not reply, but his eyes looked at her so fully, so earnestly, while his brow slightly contracted, as if he might be thinking hard to frame an answer, that she hastily added :

"No matter, darling ; I will bring him to you."

When Don Foresti came, Lady Merton told him Freddy's request. A soft light seemed to come into the priest's countenance as he listened. But she added :

"You know Sir Henry's wishes respecting any attempt to convert his son to your faith."

"Perfectly, and I shall not introduce the subject. But if the dear child asks, I must answer ; and if I answer, I must speak the truth."

Mary could not but remark that the priest did not enter the sick-room as might a sheriff's officer summoning a culprit to judgment, but rather as the joyful and gentle bearer of a pardon ; not as a herald of wrath, assuming the severity suitable to such an office, but as the glad preacher of a gospel offering love and forgiveness ; not as if impersonating implacable revenge, but as if representing a loving, compassionate, atoning Redeemer.

"How are you to-day, my dear?" Lady Merton heard through the half-open door this question tenderly asked.

"O, father, I am very ill," returned Freddy. Mary started ; it was the first time that the dear boy's brave spirit had audibly admitted the fact.

"My poor child ! These pains are very hard. If I could only bear them for you I would so gladly."

The unhappy priest stopped. His mind and heart were so full of things which he wished to say, which according to his belief, ought to be said, yet which he must not utter there, that it was impossible for him to think of commonplace, trivial phrases. Finding that the sufferer remained silent and was visibly very weak, Don Foresti, after speaking a few more words of sympathy and affection, lingeringly said good-bye, and turned to go. Feebly Freddy called him back. He took the child's hand in his own, and waited. Freddy fastened his eyes on the priest's face. His very soul seemed visible within them.

"Father," said he, "will you pray to God and the Lord Jesus Christ to forgive me all my sins?"

Mary sank to her knees, as if suddenly aware that she was in a sacred presence, knowing that there by the bedside, the boy's emaciated hand in his, was the father kneeling, shedding tears of joy, for what he had heard, and pouring out his heart in supplications. When the sound of his prayers ceased, Lady Merton heard the child's voice again, but so low that she could only perceive its sweet murmur, Don Foresti's subdued tones from time to time seeming to respond. But no words could be distinguished. Soon the voices ceased altogether, and she moved so as to see the two actors in this solemn scene. The priest was rising from his knees. He made the sign of the Cross over the dear child, murmuring an absolution and a benediction, stooped and kissed his forehead, and slowly, softly, with bent head and reverent mien, fitting a holy place, went from the chamber. He never saw Freddy again. Giving his hand to Lady

Merton, as he passed through the room where she was, he said very gently :

“It is well with the child.”

Without thought or purpose, obedient only to the feeling which dominated her, she bent her knee, and carried his hand to her lips.

“God bless and comfort you, my child,” said he devoutly, and was gone.

Mary did not enter the sick-room, she remained kneeling. Her dear Freddy’s words : “Father, will you pray to God and the Lord Jesus Christ to forgive all my sins,” were sounding in her heart. The voice of nature, the voice of a little child, humbly distrusting the efficacy of his own prayers, asking those of a saint, for such Don Foresti had always appeared to him. Why should not she, why should not all, humbly, like little children, do the same? Surely there was no reason, except that it was a precept taught by the Catholic Church. And now she went to Freddy. He was very calm, very still, turned his face to receive and return her kiss, but said nothing. Yet there was in his appearance so marked a change for the worse that she at once summoned Sir Henry who sent in great haste for Dr. Bacillo.

“The end is very near,” said the doctor. “The tuberculosis has reached his brain. It is now but the question of a few hours.”

Sir Henry’s nerves, so long under a continual strain, gave way, and retiring to a corner of the room he sobbed aloud, almost convulsively. Lady Merton fell on her knees by the bed, and kissed again and again the little hand which she had taken in her own, while tears streamed from her eyes.

"Don't cry, mamma," spoke the faint, sweet, strangely-clear voice of the child, "I shall soon be better."

With moistened eyes, the doctor departed. He could do nothing there but feel the impotency of his science and art. The sister was on her knees at the bed's foot, inaudibly offering prayers for the dying.

"Has papa got the tickets?" said Freddy suddenly.

"The tickets, darling?" returned Mary, not understanding.

"Yes, it's almost time to go. I am afraid we shall be left. There! do you not hear?" Then, after a moment of agitating anxiety, he said plaintively, "They have gone without us: we must wait." Again, a few minutes later, "Ah! we are going by the boat. That is better. It moves so smoothly, and so still—and the water is so blue, and the mountains so beautiful, and the valley—Ah! the light! the light! and the people—so many, so many—and so bright. We are almost there."

This was said painfully, slowly, hardly above a whisper, but Mary's ear caught every word. Was he thinking of the lake and mountains at Vevey? Or had he a vision of something altogether different?

The sister rose from her knees, and said softly to Lady Merton:

"Cannot he say a little prayer?"

Mary asked him, but he did not seem to understand.

"Say it for him, then," urged the sister.

Alas! Lady Merton knew no suitable prayer, or thought she did not. With all her efforts she could only remember the "Our Father." But, as she uttered it, attentively, reverently, with all her soul, its

fulness, its appropriateness flashed through her, as a sudden revelation. The Fatherhood, and its acknowledgment—more, the permitted, the authorized claim of it, the humble adoration, the charity embracing all in the word “us,” the entire submission and resignation, the complete dependence even for daily bread, the supplication for pardon, containing confession and forgiveness of others, the petition for freedom from trials and from the Evil—for living and for dying surely it comprised all that need be asked.

When she finished, the little sufferer’s eyes were closed, but his lips were moving tremulously and slowly. She bent her head to catch the words :

“——down to sleep, I pray—the Lord my soul—to keep. If I—should die—before I wake—I pray—the Lord—my soul—to take.”

He opened his eyes, but did not seem to notice Sir Henry, who, in an agony of suppressed grief, was standing at the other side of the bed.

“Freddy, dear Freddy, my darling ! O, my darling ! do you know me ?” asked Mary.

He did not speak, but the affirmative and affectionate smile, which could no longer move the muscles of his face, showed itself in the dear, fading eyes. His breath was very short, moving the air only as if it were the fluttering of his soul’s subtle, invisible wings, still lingering upon his lips—scarcely more than a succession of feeble gasps. Mary put her mouth to his, and felt a faint answering pressure.

Then, all at once, his eyes opened wide, and into them came the old far, far-off look, but intense, so intense, and he whispered with revived strength :

“See ! see ! mamma ; angels ! the angels, coming—

coming. Oh, mamma! mamma! how sweet! how beautiful—beautiful—they are; see! see!” and then the light went suddenly out of those dear eyes, the breathing seemed to stop for an instant, then came a sigh, like that of a tired child falling off to sleep, and Freddy was gone for ever from among the living.

XVI.

MORE distressing to Mary even than her own intense sorrow, was that of the Baronet, which she suffered in an aggravated degree through her exquisite sympathy. The infant who had entwined his fibres about their very vitals was gone, separated from them—yes, for ever ; so Sir Henry felt the brutal fact. His faith was not lively enough to make a future meeting appear very probable, even if there were not certain conditions precedent to fulfil. And the fate of his darling—for he did, in a rather dull, misty way, believe in the immortality of the soul—what had he done to insure his child's safety ? The remembrance that he had provided him in his early years with a pious nurse, a brave Scotch girl, honest and truly religious after her sturdy Presbyterian fashion, did not, to his mind, atone for his own personal neglect.

Lady Merton, however, had no doubt and no anxiety as to Freddy's present condition. She would not admit to herself that what had passed during Don Foresti's last visit had anything to do with her confidence ; and yet she felt in her inmost consciousness, secretly, that this was its foundation. A change had suddenly come about in her. A future existence and a future world had all at once become realities. It was as if—she thought it reverently—this pure child,

by dying had, for her, brought life and immortality to light. Into the absolutely dark future he appeared to penetrate, lighting it all about himself, and so proving its and his existence. The loved, now glorified figure was indeed the only one that she as yet seemed to perceive. But the light, the light which shone upon and from him, and which was not that of the sun—what was its nature, and whence did it come?

And Mary began to think of, to believe, and to search the Scriptures as she had never done before, seeking something confirmatory of her own trust which should take away, or, at least, alleviate Sir Henry's fears. She had a dim remembrance of what she wished to discover. By-and-by she found it; then went to her husband, and mingling her tears with his, read, "It is not the will of your Father, who is in Heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." "In Heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in Heaven." "Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of Heaven." She longed to tell the Baronet how this, his own little child, had humbled himself, had asked the intercession of the priest, but she had not the courage.

In the meantime Sir Henry himself was more inclined to seek consolation in B. and S. which, when taken often enough and in sufficient quantities, helped him to shed tears, and appeared to mellow, if it did not soften, his grief, and also enabled him to graduate its expression from pious resignation to lachrymose despair.

For herself, though her conscience was disturbed, and seemed to condemn her, Lady Merton could

not avoid receiving very great consolation from what she knew had taken place when Don Foresti made his last visit. Her heart of hearts, oppose it as she might, blessed with effusion the good priest for having given absolution to her darling. And notwithstanding that she repelled his suggestion, when he called to express condolence, that she should have some Masses said for the repose of the dear child's soul, she felt tender gratitude when he said :

"I shall remember him in all my Masses, and shall say some expressly for him, though I doubt not he is now with the angels, praying for you and his father."

Under the influence of this feeling she retired to her room, locked the door, kneeled, said the "Our Father," and, after a moment's hesitation, the "Hail Mary." Poor Lady Merton! She was greatly tempted. Her husband was too much absorbed in his own mourning to think of consoling her, and she did want sympathy for herself. Surely the Mother of Sorrows would feel with and for her, if she could be made to hear. She might try, and she did want the help of her prayers. This boy had been something more to her than a cherished infant. Her affliction was increased by a kind of fear, a feeling that her real protector was taken away. For Freddy's sense of justice, and his courage in expressing it, even when opposed to the views of his irritated father, had led her to regard this pure child as a shield and buckler.

It has been said that most of the Romans whom Mary numbered among her friends were of the Papal party, or "blacks," that is, for the most part practising and devout Roman Catholics. From them she received such evidences of heartfelt sympathy, both during

Freddy's illness and after his death, as touched her profoundly. And this also had its effect in weakening her opposition to Catholicism, for it had a certain inherent Christian quality, as it seemed to her, which made it appear quite as much the effect of their religion as of their friendship.

The intermittent qualms of conscience which she had felt now became a constant upbraiding, because her view of Protestantism and Catholicism differed more and more from her husband's, which fact she concealed and was no longer, as heretofore, absolutely open-hearted with him. She began to look upon herself as the soul in the popular legend, for the possession of which personages commissioned by the supreme powers of Good and Evil contend. But, for the life of her she could not tell which was the holy one and which the unholy ; her mind had become so much disturbed, and her original conception of truth, as lying wholly outside of the Roman Catholic Communion, had been thrown into such confusion by facts brought to her notice through that unhappy infidel, Mr. Teller. She remembered that "Michael the Archangel, when contending with the devil about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation," and that "Angels bring not railing accusations against those who are not afraid to speak evil of dignities and also as natural brute beasts speak evil of the things that they understand not."

As a help she resolved furthermore to find out whether the shepherds who flee when they see the wolf coming, in the shape of cholera, yellow fever, any pestilence or calamity, because they are hirelings and care not for the sheep, were generally Catholics or

Protestants ; whether those shepherds who, for the most part, were ready to give their lives for the sheep were Protestants or Catholics. And she determined beforehand that those who, as a rule, proved themselves hirelings by fleeing, and by unwillingness to give their lives for the sheep, could not have received the Apostolic Ordination and the Spirit imparted by the laying on of hands, however much they might talk and boast of the Apostolic Succession.

She herself already knew positively, from what had been heard and seen in Rome, that Protestants were given to speaking evil of things that they understood not ; all her life she had heard them bring railing accusations against Roman Catholics. And she made up her mind to ascertain how far these might compete with them in those practices.

Accordingly, when she next saw Don Foresti alone he was asked :

“What do Catholics say of Protestants?”

“That they are heretics for whose conversion it is a duty to pray.”

“Do they rail at—are they very bitter against them?”

“Certainly not. Ask your friend, Mr. Teller, who has heard Catholics of all classes speak of Protestantism. The feeling of old, born Catholics for Protestants, and the language also, is that of pity, as for people who have, in many cases, been forced into error, and by persistent misrepresentations and false teaching kept in it. Persons newly converted from Protestantism are apt to be impatient and severe.”

All this, and what he added of the same kind, only tightened the net in which poor Lady Merton

entangled herself more and more with every movement.

To Sir Henry the death of Freddy was a blow from which, for a time, it seemed as if he could not rally. Only when the child had disappeared from his sight for ever did he know that all the paternal affection of his heart had been centered in the angelic infant. During the early part of the winter he had greatly improved in health and spirits, so that his wife began confidently to count upon his complete re-establishment. But now both fell away again, and he went heavily. He was, indeed, for a short while, diverted by a letter received from the superior of Vivy's convent, the important part of which ran as follows :

"I have delayed informing you of a change in the life of your daughter till, by a period of probation, the quality of such change should have been tested, whether it was sincere, radical, and likely to be permanent, or transitory, a figment of her imagination, or a deceit of her heart. Having passed through the probation triumphantly she was confirmed as a member of the Holy Catholic Church yesterday, in the convent chapel. Her humility and devotion, which seemed almost an ecstasy, were most edifying and brought tears from the assembled sisters."

Of the same date was the following letter received by Hugh :

"Yesterday I joined the Catholic Church. I didn't know what else to do. You cannot imagine how fearfully dull, how awfully still and mysterious it is here, making you feel all the time as though the air was full of angels, or some such terrible creatures. So you must not persecute me. I do indeed expect to be

persecuted. Papa will persecute me, and his wife will enjoy doing it so much. But if you only knew how terrible it is here, to have them make you feel all the time that the Awful Being is in the room looking straight at you, especially in the chapel, where they go to adore Him, put upon the altar in what they call a monstrance, and where I actually see Him, that is the body of Him, that is, of His Son, as they tell me, and as I am sure they think, only it looks more like the All-Seeing Eye than it does like a body, you would know that I had to do something. Whenever I came where was that All-Seeing Eye I crouched down because I was so afraid, and the sisters thought I did it from reverence and to worship, and I let them think so. Well, I have done the only thing I can to please Him, and now I suppose I must be prepared to be persecuted, though I do hope I shall not be burned at the stake. But to tell you the truth, Huey dear, I hope when papa hears of this he will take me away from here at once. So I shall get out. Then I can recant, you know. But this a secret."

To her father she wrote :

"I think I have at last found the true Church, and a place of rest for my soul. Please, dearest papa, do not be too sorry that I have become a Roman Catholic. I am sure it is the only true religion, and I feel it in my heart. I should be perfectly happy but that I know you and mamma will be so displeased and distressed. But I pray you to pardon your poor sinful daughter who has caused you so much sorrow, and who now thinks of becoming a nun and remaining here always, and never giving you any more trouble."

Perhaps it was in consequence of the disturbed condition of Mary's mind that she began to think a near sight of the Pope would be both curious and interesting ; that, after all, he was the principal figure in Rome, which no person, who had not been presented at the Vatican Court, could be conscious of having truly seen ; and wondered why she had not sooner felt this inclination to be received at a Papal audience. The more she thought of it, and the more she heard the sovereign pontiff spoken of by people who had seen him, and to whom he had addressed some gracious word, the stronger became this desire, till she could no longer refrain from mentioning it to her husband, though as she would have expressed a wish to ascend Mont Blanc or make any other impossible excursion. She was greatly surprised and delighted when he answered :

"Well, my dear, why don't you go? I am sure some of our friends would get an invitation and take you in charge."

"What do you mean? I would not go——"

"Without me? Stop a moment, my dear. You could go perfectly well without me, and with perfect propriety. I, as a man, cannot submit to the etiquette. Kneeling to any human being is more than I can do, and more than ought to be expected of any male Briton. The female Briton is more used to submission."

From which beginning, before many days, it was arranged, partly on account of her mourning, and partly for other reasons, that Lady Merton should be presented to His Holiness, at a strictly private audience, by the Princess X.

Now, the Princess X., as everybody knew, was a personage of the very highest birth, married to a prince of the holy Roman Empire, of most ancient and honourable family. But she was, especially in the Pope's eyes, more than this; a very pious and devout Catholic, whose charity knew no limit, and whose life and character it was that called forth from Mr. Tellifer this remark:

"Protestants may preach evangelical doctrines, and call themselves evangelical Christians; and these designations may be enough for them. But for truly evangelical practice and wholly evangelical lives, commend me to Roman Catholics."

Of her presentation to the Holy Father Lady Merton wrote an account, the substance of which is here given, very nearly in her own words. She considered it exceedingly good fortune to be introduced at the Vatican by and under the protection of this lady, as indeed it was. At the same time she could not feel tranquil and self-possessed. She was about to do something so strange, so foreign to all the thoughts and experiences of her life! Her heart rose fluttering into her throat, like a frightened bird in its cage, as they traversed the stately rooms, saluted most respectfully by officers and attendants, and approached the door, on the other side of which her eye would rest for the first time on a living Pope, and she would actually stand before the successor of St. Peter and so many predecessors, whose history was the history of Christianity and of the world for more than eighteen hundred years.

At the moment in which they passed the portal, and her eyes fell upon the august, white figure seated

in a throne-like chair on a low dais : “ *Venga, venga,*” cried Leo XIII. encouragingly. To Mary’s ear his voice had in it a certain expression of tender longing, like that of an affectionate father, which was seconded and strengthened by the inviting gesture of his hand ; as if his whole being were possessed, penetrated by the most ardent desire to bring all the world to him, to his faith, his Church. So that, to her easily kindled imagination, he seemed truly the human representative of his Divine Master, yearning towards and calling all mankind to Himself. And even as this flashed through her she distinctly noticed the marvellous whiteness, the almost transparency of that small and exceedingly delicate hand ; as, later, she remarked the spirituality of his whole person, spare to emaciation and spotless as his robe.

She had questioned with herself how she might overcome her repugnance to kneeling ; but now, spite of all her pride and prejudice, or rather by an impulse stronger than all pride, prejudice, and will, an impulse rising suddenly from her heart and filling her full, to the exclusion of every other sentiment, she fell on her knees near the door and bowed her head. Again that wonderful voice filled the room with harmony : “ *Venga, venga.*” She arose, advanced a few steps, looked at his pale, pure, translucent countenance, and again kneeled. The encouraging voice once more penetrated her heart, softer, more tender even than before, and she went forward till, just before him, she bowed her knees for the third time, thus involuntarily, without thought or reflection, observing all the etiquette of the occasion. Kiss the cross embroidered on his slipper ? Kiss his foot ?

She would then, though she knew not why, have kissed the place on which that foot rested.

And as he spoke, after making her rise and sit near him, what kindness, what sincerity, what immaculate candour, what profound parental tenderness in all he said, in the manner and the purpose of it. And when he talked of Freddy's death, which he seemed to know all about, and comforted her, and bade her look forward to a meeting with him, what boundless sympathy was revealed, sympathy with all sorrow and trouble and bitter affliction, and what super-human words of consolation!

And when he gave her the parting benediction, laying his hand, which appeared so marvellously clean, lightly on her head, she felt that she was indeed blessed, and that the blessing came from on high.

"Miracles!" wrote she, concluding the account of this interview, "I believe in them to-day—now; for a miracle was then and there wrought in me. Otherwise I never could have felt and have done as I did."

XVII.

EVER since his return Mr. Tellifer had seemed to have some one thing of prime interest in his mind. All through Freddy's illness he had, indeed, been most attentive, anxious to be of service, very solicitous for the boy's life, whom he, too, loved with uncommon affection; and then desirous to console. But what consolation could he offer? He felt his poverty in this, and, after a tender expression of sympathy, was mute. Now, unexpectedly, rather in his way, as it appeared, he informed Sir Henry and Lady Merton that he was to set out for London within the week, and should probably not see them before the next winter, which he hoped to pass in Rome, as usual.

"I have," said he, "just received news from your big city—there you *have* a big thing, the biggest out—which I must look into. I never told you—for you had subjects so infinitely nearer and more sacred to think of that I could not intrude my trivial matters—I never told you that we—two or three others and myself—swore to get even with the gentleman who caused us so much mortification in the Rocky Mountains."

"And when you do?"

"We shall smile audibly. Of course the authorities are acting, or pretending to act, in the matter; but we

have more confidence in private enterprise. It is this affair which takes me to London. My partners in it think they have seen his tracks."

"And you go away from the Eternal City again without having become a Roman Catholic in fact?" asked the Baronet pleasantly.

"I tell you what, though," returned Mr. Teller; "if I believed the Apostles' Creed, which you, professing to believe, recite so often, I should conceive admission into the society of and communion with the ever-living, presently living Mary, Mother of the Lord, and the Apostles, and martyrs, and saints, to a share in their holiness, in their protection, their loving solicitude, their perfect prayers, not for an hour, or a day, or a week, but for ever and ever, according to that Creed, and the actual belief of Catholics, an ineffable privilege for which throughout all eternity I should not be able to praise and thank God enough."

Just here entered the ritualist, Rev. Mr. Tiddles, who had lately returned from Egypt and the Holy Land. After the incidental interruption, Mary brought the conversation back to the subject of which Mr. Teller was speaking. Soon Rev. Mr. Tiddles said:

"Our Church has all that the Roman Catholics can offer."

"I can hardly accept that; I have looked into it."

"But I assure you, it has."

"Which is your Church?"

"The Anglican, of course."

"That time and again, with all the power it could use, has straightly commanded you and your sect not to teach in this name. How then do you call it your Church? Besides, according to that great lawyer,

Mr. Serjeant Bellasis, you cannot administer the few sacraments which your Parliament retained."

"And who, pray, was Mr. Serjeant Bellasis?"

"As you know, his title of Serjeant shows him to have been a distinguished lawyer. And he was a lawyer who examined for himself the question as to validity of Anglican ordinations, and so as to the fact whether your Church had preserved the Apostolic Succession. As an Anglican he was interested in this matter. After careful scrutiny of the records and documents he concluded that your ordinations are invalid, and that you lost the Apostolic Succession. In consequence of this conclusion, and wishing to obtain the sacraments, he became a Roman Catholic."

"Well, really, you know, I can't say I think he deserved his title of Serjeant; I can't for my life, you know," remarked Sir Henry.

"Certainly not," said Mr. Tiddles, positively. "Besides, we have good authority for not considering consecration needful."

"What?"

"The wish of Henry VIII. to have it so, and the expressed opinions of Cranmer and Barlow. They said the Apostles were forced to make bishops because there was no Christian king or prince——"

"Like Henry VIII.," put in Mr. Teller.

"To do it. Cranmer said that 'In the New Testament he that is appointed to be a bishop or a priest needeth no consecration by the Scriptures, for election or appointment thereto is sufficient.' And Barlow said, 'All that, according to the New Testament, was needful to make a bishop was the appointing.'"

"How then about your Apostolic Succession?"

"Appointments succeeded one another, which makes them Apostolic."

"How about the laying on of hands, and thus imparting the Holy Ghost in the Apostolic manner?"

"I have told you Cranmer said it was not needful."

Here Mr. Pocus joined the company.

"It would be so easy for you to end all doubts by doing as Mr. Bellasis did and going over to the Catholics," suggested Mr. Tellifer.

"Ah, my grazious! You surely would not have him leave his Church," broke in Mr. Pocus, "which is a good mother, and provides good places, and commodious principles, and all the conveniences. It would be most ungrateful." Had Mr. Pocus been drinking?

"And a sacrifice; worse than missionary life," returned Mr. Tellifer.

"To be sure, my dear, for when they go as missionaries they can take their wives with them——"

"Prepared to breed members for the mission church if they cannot be procured otherwise," murmured Mr. Tellifer, amused.

"With an allowance for her support, he, oh, ah, my grazious! I should like to be a missionary myself, oh, ya, ya,—and all the comforts, and the sweet excitement of preparing to convert the heathen would be wanting if they could not talk to a dear sympathiser of love in a bungalow. Oh, ah, my grazious! and if they could not anticipate the dear cares of a family supported by liberal contributors to the home society, and the soothing and inspiring dissonance of children, ya, ya. Knowing this our Church, like a wise, as well as a good mother, is indulgent." Surely the man had

lost his senses. The Baronet and Mr. Tiddles stared at him with amazement and indignation.

"In a word, she submits to your conditions,"—Mr. Tellifer addressed Mr. Tiddles—"in order to have the honour and the profit of your membership, like a thrifty department of State, as she is. This is diametrically opposite to what takes place in the Roman Church. There the member submits. He submits himself to its doctrines and surrenders all control over his religion, as if that religion were really God's and not his; dictated by God and not by himself. The difference between the Catholic and all other so-called Churches may, I think, be summed up in that one word, submission. That is received as coming directly from God; these are made, controlled, reformed, remodelled by men, and are men's subjects, submitting to them.

"These, I suppose, are incidents of modern Christianity," said Sir Henry, with the air of a philosopher.

"Modern Christianity!" cried Mr. Tellifer, speaking impatiently, as he was apt to do when his logical sense was offended. "You might as well talk to me of a modern Lord God, as distinguished from the Ancient of Days, or of a modern Jesus Christ, as superseding the one crucified eighteen hundred and forty odd years ago——"

"My gracious! that's what we do talk of. We've changed all that," exclaimed Mr. Pocus, interrupting, to the greater disgust of the Baronet and Mr. Tiddles.

"As if there were varieties of the Divine Being," went on Mr. Tellifer, "and by exciting party spirit

you could elect the variety of your choice, or as if, instead of a new dispensation bringing a fulfilment of the law, a new and different Deity had been brought to light, and that the original Almighty had passed away, after the fashion of this world. I stand at your point of departure, a God, such as the Bible reveals Him, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and His son, Jesus Christ, co-substantial, co-eternal, co-equal with Him, and therefore changeless eternally. The advocacies of a Modern Christianity, a Christianity adapted to the times, to the spirit of the times and so forth, instead of adapting the times to Christianity, are only cunning attempts to do away with the religion of Jesus Christ under the cloak of its name, and may be joined in by all its enemies. The 'Church of the future,' if different from the Apostolic Church, must be bad; or the Apostolic Church was bad from the beginning. I speak as an actual believer should."

"Do you really think, then, that the reformers and Protestants have done no good?" mildly enquired Mr. Tiddles.

"They have been permitted that the Scriptures might be fulfilled by them saying, 'Lo, here is Christ, or there'; and also what Paul wrote: 'For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.'"

"I believe that fellow is a Jesuit, using his pretended infidelity as a stalking-horse," said Mr. Tiddles aside to Sir Henry.

"I thought so at first," returned the Baronet, "and, by gad! I told him so to his face more than once. But now I think he is sincere in a kind of a crazy way. Every Yankee has to own and ride an ism, and for the sake of contrariety, which so many of them mistake for originality, he has chosen Catholicism."

"He seems to have an answer for everything."

"Of course he has. Otherwise he would lose his nationality, you know."

"I wonder what he would say about the dogma of the Immaculate Conception."

"Ask him."

"Does the dogma of the Immaculate Conception seem to you logical and true?" demanded Mr Tiddles, raising his voice and speaking like a professor at examination.

"Certainly. But first let me say that there is hardly a Protestant who knows—or will take any, the least, trouble to know—what that dogma really is. As usual they prefer to denounce something which does not exist."

"Is it not plainly at war with the plan of redemption, by making the Mother of Christ not a true woman with her human nature, but a miraculous person, and therefore incapable of transmitting that human nature with its subjectivity to temptation?"

"She was the second Eve. Although born without the stain of original sin, as also was Eve, Mary was born subject to temptation, as was also Eve, and this subjectiveness to temptation she transmitted to her Son without the stain of original sin, which He could not receive. I speak for myself as a philosopher, reasoning from premises which you admit."

“But this is a modern invention, proclaimed by Pius IX——”

“Excuse me. Like other doctrines of the Church, it was not declared a dogma till seriously disputed. The doctrine itself is old as the Church. The Apostle St. Andrew said in his profession of faith before the Proconsul Egeus: ‘Because the first man was created of immaculate earth, it was necessary that the perfect man should be born of an *immaculate virgin*, through whose means the Son of God, who had before created man, might repair that eternal life which had been lost through Adam.’ St. Dionysius, a famous doctor of the third century, says, ‘Christ dwelt not in a servant, but *in His Holy Tabernacle not made with hands*, Mary, the Mother of God.’ ‘That most praiseworthy Tabernacle of God, Mary, the Virgin, and Mother of God, was firmly set by the Holy Ghost, and protected by the power of the Most High.’ And, if you would, you could find abundant proofs of the indisputable fact that this doctrine existed from the first.”

“Proofs for you, perhaps——”

“Proofs for every honest man. Why ought you to be unwilling that the Virgin Mary should be born immaculate? Why should you dispute the proposition without examination or consideration, and with the disposition of a partisan? Is it because the doctrine is Papal? So is the doctrine that there is one God in three persons, the Father Almighty, His only begotten Son Jesus Christ, the true and only Mediator between God and man, and the Holy Ghost, proceeding from these two. So are the doctrines of Original Sin, the Atonement, Baptismal Regeneration, the Inspiration

of the Scriptures, and so forth. Of what good is your partisan zeal? This is not a political question—the issue at an election. Its truth or falsity cannot be determined by a majority of ballots. It will remain unchanged and unchangeable however you vote.”

“And what,” asked Mr. Tiddles, continuing his examination, “do you say to that abominable doctrine of indulgences?”

“That it is plainly a logical deduction from the communion of saints, in which you profess to believe. I have not time now to expose my views of it; will only say that if, instead of the word ‘indulgence,’ in its modern sense, you use it as it is used in the Latin of the Mass, and by the Church always, in the sense of ‘forgiveness,’ or ‘remission,’ and not in the sense of ‘permission,’ which it has not and never had, the doctrine will be more easy for you to understand. If I were a Roman Catholic I should try to lead a holy Christian life, according to the precepts of the Church. If I succeeded in this I should feel sure that the indulgences would come of themselves.”

“The safer way, I fancy.”

“However, to show the popular Catholic understanding of indulgences, I will cite from ‘Busk’s Folk-Lore of Rome’ part of a traditional story current among the commonest and most illiterate people, about the Pardon of Assisi.

“‘Were there a great many people at the Pardon?’ asked the Pope of St. Felix.

“‘Oh, yes, an immense number,’ answered simple St. Felix. ‘I had not thought the whole world contained such a number.’

“‘Then a vast number of sins must have been remitted that day?’ said the Pope.

“St. Felix only sighed in reply.

“‘Why do you sigh?’ asked the Pope.

“St. Felix hesitated to reply, but the Pope bade him tell what was in his mind.

“‘There were but few who gained the indulgence in all that multitude,’ replied the Saint; ‘for among them all were few who came with the contrition required.’”

Here Mr. Tellifer, who had overstayed his time, hastily took leave. Mr. Pocus, who had been too intent on slyly watching Mary to push himself, as usual, into the latter part of this discussion, found an opportunity to whisper Sir Henry:

“My grazious! if you don’t look out Lady Merton will surely fall into that horrible abyss, the Roman Catholic Church. You better get Dr. Littledale for her.”

“She knows him.”

“Does she? Ah! that’s a pity. Then he will do no good; only make bad worse. I have it. We must ask his promoter, the Society for the Prevention of Christian Knowledge, to find a new man and a cunning, who can invent something fresh and terrible—yes, it ought to be terrible—and who will make all his citations of authorities from books which were never written, and then their falsification can’t be proved. Littledale is bold; yes, it must in justice be admitted, but not bold enough; no, sir, not bold enough.”

“Oh,” returned the Baronet impatiently, “let Littledale alone. I am beginning to be tired of him.”

“Ah, my grazious! What be you coming to?”

Littledale might be useful yet, if the Society for the Perversion of Christian Knowledge knew how to use him. He ought to have an *alias*, like other great ra——”

“Mr. Pocus !”

“My grazious ! don’t you be afraid, Sir Henry, don’t you be afraid. I know how he ought to be called. Like other writers, I was going to say—like other great writers. With us the end does justify the means, you know, though never with Roman Catholics, owing to fundamental differences.”

“Since I found out that this was not a maxim of the Jesuits I begin to believe, myself, that it is a true one, which we may avow——”

“My grazious ! no, not avow ; never do that, my dear ; but act upon it, Sir Henry, act upon it, and still denounce it as Jesuitical, just as if you didn’t know the contrary. But Lady Merton, my dear, will you not have an especial care of her ? The danger, you know, the danger——”

“You mistake,” said Sir Henry, with an air of great satisfaction, “there is no need. She will never do anything to displease me. And they cannot persuade her that anything which I disapprove is necessary for her salvation.”

The Baronet’s trust was well founded.

Mr. Tellifer’s intended trip to London gave Sir Henry’s thoughts and feelings a new direction. He became suddenly possessed by a great desire to spend the spring and summer in England. To this plan Mary was not averse, especially as she hoped the visit to his home would have a beneficial effect on the health and spirits of her husband. They determined,

therefore, to go with the American, who, before their departure, found time to take them to the church of SS. Giovanni and Paolo. He desired that they should particularly remark a marble slab, with an inscription indicating the spot where these saints were beheaded.

"What barefaced impudence!" cried the Baronet. "That inscription is an insult to common-sense, upon my word it is, you know. It really makes me indignant. As if any man in his right mind would believe a word of all that!"

"Why not?" asked Mr. Tellifer.

"Because it is obviously an imposture, you know."

"Not obvious enough for me to see," returned the American. "On the contrary, when I remember the veneration felt by the early Christians for martyrs, and for all that pertained to them, and the care with which facts were preserved by tradition in the memories of people who had no printed books, it appears obvious to me that knowledge of the spot on which two Roman officers were executed for their faith should have been surely kept for a hundred years, more or less——"

"How, a hundred years?"

"Because this Church has existed since the fifth century, as you may read in your guide book, and the two saints were martyred under Julian the Apostate, that is, later than the middle of the fourth century, or about the year 362, to be exact."

"Oh, well, if you are going into facts——"

"That is just what I propose to do. I have looked into it, and found most interesting matter. The Passionist Brother from the adjacent monastery, whom I see yonder, will expose the results better than I.

They are all my friends, and confidently hope for my conversion."

"On what ground?"

"The knowledge that I do go into facts, and study candidly, seeking only truth for truth's sake, and not to wrench proofs to the support of prejudice, or to bolster any favourite or convenient doctrine or party."

At Mr. Tellifer's request, the Passionist took them to the excavations recently made under the church.

"Here, as you see," said the American, "they have already brought to light several rooms of the palace in which the two saints lived, and the one in which they were put to death—even the very spot of their execution: incontestable material evidence that the inscription above is a true record."

This visit, as generally happened, had an effect on Lady Merton, unsuspected by her husband. For she reflected and drew inferences. In this case she not only saw unanswerable testimony to the truth of this particular tradition, but very strong evidence to confirm the trustworthiness of such traditions generally.

Within three days they were all on their way to England. Even the anticipation of this visit had been restful to Mary. "There," said she to herself, "I shall no longer be an object for which opposing principles, or forces, whatever they may be, will contend. There I shall enjoy the repose granted by indifference; the tranquillity of a person in regard to whose spiritual welfare no one is troublesomely concerned; among those who have come to think like my dear father in his last days, or who have always thought, like my dear husband."

Alas, for the vanity of human expectations!

Hardly was she restored after the fatigues of her journey, when, showing a harmony of sentiment which they manifested in regard to nothing else, they all, with one accord, began to ask her what she thought of Roman Catholicism since her residence in Rome.

"I am sorry you have asked that question," she replied. "I am not yet entirely sure of my thoughts in regard to it, and hardly know how to give an answer satisfactory to you or to myself. Not that I have not distinct notions, but because I suspect that they are not final. I am still, or was up to the time when we left Rome, investigating. For investigation is there forced upon any fair-minded, intelligent, reasonable person."

"We do not see how. No person who has made a fairly good use of Protestant privileges can go out of England without a sufficiently clear notion of religious Rome and Roman Catholicism."

Here Lady Merton made a mistake. Instead of letting the conversation drop, or changing it, yielding to her generous spirit, and what she conceived to be a love of truth and justice, she replied imprudently and rather warmly :

"No person who has used Protestant privileges, as you call them, can possibly go out of England without an utterly obscure and distorted notion of Roman religion. I speak from personal knowledge of the subject. Nothing can be falser, more cruelly, slanderously false than what is generally said, written, and preached by Protestants in regard to Roman Catholicism."

Fortunately the talk was interrupted at this point.

Within a week the leaning of Lady Merton towards Catholicism was mentioned and discussed generally ; and within a month it was as generally asserted that she had been perverted, and had secretly joined the Church of Rome.

All this would have been of small moment but for the fact that, whenever religious differences were mentioned, such a turn was given to the conversation that Mary found herself constrained to be the champion of Catholics. And the more she defended them the stronger to her appeared their cause ; every argument used by her in their favour was a force tending to her perversion. In her zeal, excited, as she chose to think, by a chivalrous sense of right, of loyalty to candour and honesty, she completely uncovered, and exposed herself to a reaction, the rebound of the very weapons which she used in combating. It was as if a relentless fate pursued her in England as at Rome.

Among the persons who believed that Lady Merton had secretly joined the Catholic Church was one who felt it her duty to inform the Baronet of his wife's apostasy. And so submissive was this person to her senses of duty, especially when they dictated the telling something injurious to the one of whom, and disagreeable to the one to whom, it was told, that she would have suffered martyrdom sooner than leave such duty unfulfilled.

Sir Henry received the news cheerfully, laughing at his informant for her pains, and assuring her that she was never more mistaken in her life.

"But, Sir Henry," said she, "if it were true, what would you do?"

"I tell you it is not, and it cannot be true," he replied. "Lady Merton would not, and could not, deceive me; and she would not, and could not, become a Roman Catholic unless I did also."

"But, suppose she should?" persisted his good friend.

"I cannot suppose any such thing."

"Oh, yes, you can. Anything may be supposed."

"Well, suppose she did, and suppose I turned her out of the house, if you want to," said he, out of patience.

Within three days Mary was acquainted with the fact that her husband had threatened to turn her out of doors if she dared become a Roman Catholic.

Altogether Lady Merton did not find in England the mental repose for which she had hoped, and it was with no feeling of regret that she saw the time arrive for their departure to the Continent. The Baronet had clearly not profited by the visit to his native country. He had, indeed, with unusual regularity and increasing industry, followed the course of brandy and soda prescribed by himself for low spirits and sorrow. But the cure seemed to have an effect like certain ones practised at famous baths and springs; the patient steadily grew worse, so much so that he became to his wife a cause of constant anxiety and watchfulness. It was with a lively hope that the diversion of travel would interrupt this course that Mary left England, and with her husband took the way to Switzerland. For Sir Henry, thinking there was always a possibility that Vivy might rashly choose to be a nun if left where she was, and that it would soon be time to find her a husband, had decided to take her back with them to Rome.

XVIII.

ONE day in the latter part of October, a short time after they had reached Rome, Sir Henry took his wife and Vivy to drive in the Villa Borghese, and, returning, followed the line of carriages to the piazzetta on the Pincio. It was an afternoon of extreme loveliness, a band was playing, and the place was well filled with vehicles, while a crowd of pedestrians was grouped on the opposite side, near the music-stand. Few of the resident foreigners had yet come back from their summer wanderings, and the presence of strangers was easily noticed by anyone familiar with the aspect of Roman loiterers.

As Mary's eyes glanced carelessly at the throng, they were attracted by the fixed gaze of the man whom she had twice seen the previous winter. He was standing alone. His stare troubled her more than ever. Suddenly she remembered and recognized, or thought she recognized, in him the person associated with Vivy in that most distressing dream at Vevey, more than two years before. He was a youngish man, his dress remarkable for good taste, and altogether his appearance forced attention, the more so because of that scar on the side of his face. Perhaps it was this which, in Mary's eyes, gave him a repellent look ; perhaps it was his fanciful resemblance to the man of her dream.

She asked the Baronet if he knew this person, but he had never seen him before. Lady Merton's question called Vivy's regard to the stranger, and gave that young lady the notion that her step-mother admired him, which was reason enough why she should try to attract his attention. During her residence in the convent, Miss Merton had improved much in appearance, and could hardly fail to be remarked anywhere, particularly as her style of dress was rather striking than tasteful. But in Italy her red hair was itself a cynosure, and, under the designation Titianesque, regarded as a great beauty. Her vivacious eyes were quite as ready to inflame as her locks, and her whole manner indicated an incendiary purpose. It was not, therefore, difficult for her to fix the searching gaze of men "about town." When she had achieved her design, the stranger changed his place, so as to stand behind the carriage and directly facing Vivy. Perceiving the movement and her step-daughter's play, Mary, who was troubled by all this more than the cause seemed to justify, requested Sir Henry to take them home.

The first thing that Miss Merton had seriously undertaken on her arrival in Rome, was the seduction of her step-mother's maid, a bright Italian girl, whom Mary had found it convenient to take on her return to the city. To this servant, the step-daughter represented, in a confidential way, that she was really and by right mistress of the house; that the money spent in keeping it was her money; that her income was enormous, and she did not mind letting her father and his wife dispose of a portion, of which, however, she could deprive them if she saw fit; and

that she was able to make or mar the fortunes of any quantity of serving-women. She let it be understood that her heart had conceived an especial affection for, and had unusual confidence in, this particular wench, which if she would reciprocate, giving faithful service, there should be no end of the benefits which would be heaped on her. But this service would have to be rendered secretly, without exciting the suspicions even of Lady Merton, who should continue to be her ostensible mistress. In fact, she plied temptations so dazzling and so confusing that virtue more rigid than this bewildered handmaiden's would have yielded.

Her second undertaking had been by storm to capture Don Foresti who, as usual, came frequently to the house, where he was always welcomed with the cordiality and confidence of a tried and dear friend.

In Lady Merton's manner and tone of voice, when meeting and speaking to this visitor, a certain manifest tenderness was mingled with respect, for with him she had always present that scene by Freddy's death-bed. In this tone and manner her step-daughter, exercising that marvellous faculty of perceiving everywhere indications of impurity, saw evidences of guilty passion. Of itself this was enough to make her covet the conquest of Don Foresti; it would be a blow planted in the very vitals of her father's wife, besides pleasure of another kind. But all her assaults had no visible effect on their object, who uniformly treated the Baronet's daughter with a courteous reserve that was the cause of constant pique, and worse.

Under pretence of going to Mass, as she said her religion required, she went out every morning attended by the maid whom she had corrupted; and the result

was that within two weeks from the day when Mary had noticed that most repugnant man at the Pincio, she and her husband received the card of a stranger, and before they could fairly read his name and address, Vivy had given orders for him to be admitted. She had not forgotten this forcing process and its success at Vevey. A moment afterwards the Hon. Frank Glyder entered, and Lady Merton, with a shudder of her soul, recognised the Unknown. So great was her surprise and the feelings of antipathy and repulsion, that she could not command herself. Her manner of receiving the visitor was so cold, so distant and haughty, as to seem like a studied insult, and almost immediately she left the room. The Baronet, embarrassed by his wife's conduct, and wondering what could be its reason, did his best to atone for it by a show of effusive cordiality. Thinking Vivy was animated by a like purpose he did not detect certain signs of an easy acquaintance, and even familiarity, between her and the Hon. Glyder, which would not have escaped a shrewder and more watchful guardian.

When the Hon. Frank made it known that he was about to take leave, Vivy quitted the room, and in the ante-chamber waited for him to pass out, while Sir Henry hastened to his wife for explanations.

"There: you have seen for yourself," said Miss Merton.

"D—— her! She shall pay me for that," responded Glyder.

"She is in love with that priest so much that she has eyes for nobody else."

"I will make her see this person, though."

"Oh, you think more of her than of me."

"To-morrow, at the usual place?" The question was asked very tenderly.

"Yes, and the same hour," answered Vivy.

"I cannot help it!" exclaimed Mary, replying to her husband's questions. "I have an instinctive and unaccountable horror of that man."

"How unreasonable!" cried Sir Henry.

"I admit it, since the only reason that I know of for such feelings is a dream."

"A dream?"

"Yes, that dream at Vevey; do you not remember?"

"Well, now, really my dear, you know, I thought you had no superstitions."

"It is not superstition; but *it* is stronger than I. Who is he?"

He says he is a son of old Lord Glyder, and that all his life, till very recently, has been passed in Australia and India. I never knew any of the Glyders personally, but I remember hearing some talk about one of the boys who, after a terrible quarrel with his father, disappeared."

"Where and how did Vivy become acquainted with him?"

"I have had no opportunity to ask her, but shall do so."

When the Baronet carried out his purpose, Miss Merton answered readily that the gentleman had been presented to her by Lady Emily—who was then in Rome—one morning when she met them while on her way to Mass; and he had asked permission to call: all of which was false. The acquaintance had been

made without any introduction, through her contriving and the maid's assistance. Sir Henry was disposed to be credulous. His great wish in regard to the girl was to have her married as soon as might be, to some man who would be her master. And the bare possibility that this was the desired husband led him to view indulgently many things connected with this visit. The next day, but without the knowledge of his wife, he left his card for the Hon. Frank Glyder ; and that gentleman, appreciating the Baronet's friendliness, shortly repeated his call, coming early in the evening and going late, after having enjoyed hearing Vivy's music, her sprightly but capricious conversation, a glass of B. and S., and a discussion of British and Italian politics with Sir Henry, who was more and more pleased by the brilliant qualities and great intelligence of his new acquaintance. Mary only protested by leaving the room as before ; though this time she studied to do so after some delay, and in a manner to give no offence.

"What do you know of that man?" she asked her husband later.

"Nothing, except his name, and that he is a gentleman."

"How did you learn that?"

"Well, really now, my dear—really, you know, I think I can tell a gentleman when I see him ; I do indeed, you know."

"Is he courting Vivy?"

"Well, really, you know, I can't say that, yet ; I can't, upon my word, but I hope so."

"And you do not care to make enquiries about him? It would be so easy in England."

"Not till he asks for Vivy: it will be time enough then. But, upon my soul, I cannot understand your suspicions; I can't, indeed, you know."

"Not suspicion—mistrust; and I believe it in this case as you do your eyes."

"But, my dear, for my sake, do me a favour, my dear." He knew the charm which the words, "for my sake" contained, and that she could not refuse.

"What is it?"

"Try to be friendly with this gentleman, for my sake, you know."

And so it came about that in a few weeks the Hon. Frank Glyder obtained the privilege of an intimate friend in the family of Sir Henry Merton.

All this time Nina had been living a very retired life at Bologna, anxious, yet fearing to receive news of her father; in turn caressed and neglected by him whom she called husband. Whenever she addressed him by that name, however, which she fondly thought the most endearing, he manifested impatience and irritation, the cause of which she could not understand, but forbore to ask any explanation. She would have been lonely enough much of the time, save for her religion, which Hugh ridiculed as superstition, and her studies, with which he so far sympathised as to admire and applaud her remarkable progress, and to furnish her with every aid and advantage. He considered her education, as the work of his hands, had in regard to it that sense of protectorate so dear to the British heart; felt that it did him credit, and thus it was constant incense to his vanity. Of late, however, his impatience and irritability had become excessive. Nothing that she said or did pleased him;

and when, for his sake, she kept silence, he made her for this also feel his displeasure.

Had she read some letters recently received by Hugh from his sister, poor Nina could have guessed at the cause of, and been made even more wretched by, her master's ill-humour. For Vivy had written him glowing and repeated accounts of her new friend, Lady Emily; of her beauty, her friendliness, her enormous wealth, all in her own right, and her admiration of his photograph, as well as her desire to see the original.

Once, when Hugh had one of Miss Merton's most enthusiastic letters in his pocket, received that morning—Nina, in her sweet, childlike way, wished to caress him; but he roughly repelled her, saying, with no gentleness, that she was too old for such nonsense. Nina stepped back; the smile faded from her lips, and the colour from her cheeks, as she gazed at him, her great eyes wide open, and suffused with tears, mutely wondering and waiting. Then, after a moment, she softly turned, and went to her room. That look told so plainly and so pathetically of a deep, internal wound, that Hugh felt something like remorse, and after a few minutes, spent in walking to the window, looking out, while he bit his nails, turning back, only again to come forward and gaze into the street, as if he expected to see something outside which would calm his troubled conscience, he followed the poor child to her chamber. She was on her knees, before a small image of the Virgin, with her back towards the door. So gently did he enter that she was not disturbed, and he heard her say, softly, in tones of the most intense, all-absorbing supplication :

“O, most Blessed Mary, thou knowest all the dolours of motherhood—knowest them as no other can. The sorrows of wifehood, though, thou didst not learn. But, I assure thee, that sometimes they are very great and bitter, as thou wouldst have known had holy St. Joseph been unkind to thee. May he pardon me, and be for ever blessed for all his goodness to thee and thy Divine Son. Thy tender compassionate heart pities all our miseries of whatever kind, O, most Blessed Mother; but I fear thou art not aware how great, how very great, are mine just now—and I have been so happy! I beseech thee, therefore, to pray for me and my dear husband; to entreat that my darling Ugolino may cease to be so strange, so changed; that he may be brought back to his old self; that he may not study so hard; that he may not any more make himself ill by too much work; and that I may be taught to nurse, comfort, and tranquillize him, as thou didst blessed St. Joseph, and that I may make his home happy for him, as thou didst; and that I may always so conduct myself as never to displease or trouble him, but keep his love, and do him good, and make his life joyful and blessed——”

Hugh had suddenly taken Nina in his arms, unable to restrain himself longer, and cried :

“Your Blessed Virgin has answered your prayers sooner even than you expected, you awful little Pagan;” and he kissed her over and over again.

She was so exceedingly, so supernaturally beautiful, as she looked gratefully up, her whole being glowing and glorified, as it were, with her love for him, that, for the moment, he thought nothing else in

the whole world could be so lovely ; and he did not care how many hundreds of thousands of pounds Lady Emily might have—let her take herself and them to another market.

The day thus begun was a very, very happy one for Nina. Hugh remained with her, and in the evening they went to a concert, where she heard music which seemed to condense her happiness, as if it had been a subtle vapour diffused through her, into the sweetest tears, that appeared first to fill her heart, and thence well and overflow from her eyes. She was in a state of perfect, though transient, beatitude. As they were coming home Hugh said abruptly :

“ You *are* a Pagan.”

“ Oh, Ugolino ! why do you say that ? ”

“ Because your chief god, or goddess, is the Virgin Mary ; and besides, you have so many smaller ones whom you call saints.”

“ Now, Ugo, that is not true ; if it were I should be an awful sinner. They are not gods at all, but our elder brothers and sisters, though holy now in heaven.”

“ If what I said is not true, why does your Catholic Church teach it ? ”

“ It does not teach it. Why will you get everything wrong ? There is but one God in three Persons, and to worship anybody or anything else with the worship due to Him is a dreadful crime.”

“ Then why do you pray to the Virgin ? ”

“ I don't pray to her, not as you mean pray.”

“ How do I mean pray ? ”

“ To ask something of God. To pray, as you mean it, is to do something which can only be done to God,

and, therefore, according to your sense, to pray to anybody else is to do to that person what should only be done to God. That is how you mean pray."

"And how do you mean it?"

"I? Why, prayer is an earnest, solemn petition addressed to any person or power from which we wish to have something."

"And so your prayers to the Virgin——"

"Are petitions to her that she will get this or that done for us by asking, that is, by *her* prayers; just as you would pray some great personage to get from your queen something that you wanted. And you might say to the great personage, 'Give me such and such a thing,' while you knew that only your queen could give it, and you knew that the great personage knew this also; and therefore it would not be necessary for you always to tell the great personage to ask the queen, or to get it from the queen for you by asking, because you and the personage both know it is the only way. And so we sometimes ask the Blessed Virgin to do something for us just as if, so far as the words go, she could do it of herself; but we and she know that she can only do this by interceding."

"What is the need of her intercession? Why do you not ask directly?"

"So I do, and so we all do. But we also want others to ask for us, to help us, and we are sure that no asking is so efficient as the Blessed Virgin's, and, after hers, the other saints, because we are such insignificant, unworthy things. But you, perhaps, would not ask directly your great queen; you would feel surer if the great personage, a dear friend of the queen, should ask for you."

“But what makes you think that your great personage, the Virgin Mary, will do what you ask?”

“First, because she is a friend to everybody who wants to love her Son, as is natural; and she sympathises with all sorrow, for she was acquainted with it. Second, because she is our mother. Just as Eve is the mother of all living naturally, Mary is the mother of all living supernaturally, that is, spiritually. Eve was our mother in the physical sense, Mary in the spiritual sense; for her Son is the Brother of all those who receive Him, to whom He gave power to become sons of God. And third, because she is full of compassionate charity, and on whom can she exercise it if not on us? for in heaven nobody needs compassion.”

“What good do you get by all your ‘Hail Mary’s’?”

“We honour the Blessed Virgin, and adore the marvellous condescension, and the stupendous miracle of the Incarnation. Why should we not honour her whom not only the angel, God’s ambassador, venerated and hailed, but to whom God Himself paid unspeakable honour by choosing her to be His mother, obeying and reverencing her as a Son? Sometimes men are not satisfied with their mothers; but He was with His, for He chose and set her apart as such from the beginning of the world.”

“Pooh! Do you suppose He cares what is done to her now?”

“You, who were made like Him, that is, in His image, your soul in the likeness of His soul, would care very much what was done to your mother, if living; and you care how her memory is treated now

that she is dead. No one could grieve, wound, or insult you so deeply in any other way as by speaking evil or disrespectfully of her who bore you ; and in no way could he so easily earn your goodwill as by doing her, or her memory, honour."

"When did you learn all this theology?—superstition, I call it."

"When I was a little girl."

"Who taught it to you?"

"The old curate that married us."

At this word Hugh lowered his eyes, and pulled the curtain over them.

"Did he make an exception of you?"

"Not in the least. All the children are taught the same. They have to learn the catechism."

"Poor little things!" And Hugh turned the conversation.

That very night, before sleeping, he wrote Vivy that he was too busy with and too much interested in his studies, and in preparing for an examination, to think of going to Rome, or to care what Lady Emily or any other woman might feel while looking at his photograph. He remained under the impression, received in the morning and strengthened during the whole of that day, for some time ; and Nina, in her happiness and gratitude, could not enough thank the Blessed Madonna for the gracious interposition and intercession on her behalf.

At length, one day, with a ravishing blush on her lovely, ah ! passingly lovely face, kissing his cheek, and then hiding her eyes on his neck, about which her arms were entwined, she told Hugh something in a very soft, sweet murmur, which nobody else could

have heard, had anyone been present. He embraced her tenderly, pressed her again and again to his heart, and then, after a few minutes, became abstracted, and began to bite his nails, a sign of which Nina only too well knew the meaning. Poor thing ! her heart sank in her bosom like lead. She had thought to give her husband a great and lasting joy, and he had so soon forgotten it, or it was of so little consequence to him, or, worse, could it be a displeasure, a cause of vexation, and of his sudden change of mood ? After vainly waiting some minutes to be noticed again, as if afraid of disturbing him, she silently glided away to her own room.

XIX.

NO one could be many minutes in a position to observe the Hon. Mr. Glyder and Miss Merton, when they were together, without remarking signs of greater intimacy than was warranted by the hours which they had passed in Lady Merton's drawing-room. Mary had spoken of this to her husband, but he treated the matter lightly as Vivy's "way." Probably he would have thought his wife's uneasiness worthy of graver consideration had he known that what she noticed was the result of a condition of things in itself serious enough. In fact, the Baronet's daughter had met and talked with the Hon. Frank Glyder in a shady recess at the Pincio, or some other retired spot, almost every morning since she had first seen him.

In affairs of love Vivy was straightforward and ingenuously outspoken, using no subterfuges, and going directly to her object. She possessed no quality of a coquette ; she would have disdained, as a Barmecide feast, from a distance, with artificial heat to warm, singe, melt a victim, or gradually to draw him on by the magic fascinations of drooping lids, the graceful witchery of apparent concealment, and the ravishing insinuation of consciously unconscious posture. She would have scorned, as a weakening distraction and intolerable delay, to exhale an atmosphere full

of suggestions as is a midsummer night of odours, troubling, enervating, intoxicating, as if saturated with invisible vapour of wine. On the contrary, her world of love had no atmosphere, nothing to give colour and light and shade. All was bare, barren of flowers, glaring, giving signs of internal heat like a scorched volcanic region.

At the second meeting she had asked the Hon. Mr. Glyder, with a nestling movement towards his arms :

“ May I call you Frank ? ”

“ Do, I beg ; it would be so kind of you. I should be delighted.”

“ And you must call me Vivy.”

“ Nothing could please me more except——”

“ Except what ? ”

“ I am afraid to say it.”

“ To me ? You can say anything to me. Are we not friends ? ”

“ Till the end of time.”

“ Then why should you not be frank, frank to me my Frank ? Except what ? ”

“ Except to call you my treasure, my angel, my darling ! ”

“ Oh, Frank ! Do you really mean it ? ”

“ Upon my soul.”

“ And you truly love me ? ”

“ With all my powers, all the love of a Glyder.”

Vivy's hand sought his as they sat on a bench at the Pincio ; his arm stole about her waist ; nobody was looking, their lips met—

Before Vivy parted from her Glyder, she had promised to be his wife.

While all this was going on, the maid, who had

accompanied her actual mistress to the rendezvous, was standing at a discreet distance, her face turned from the lovers, apparently absorbed studying light and shade in the Villa Borghese.

And now the main occupation of the Hon. Frank's intelligence was to find a way of constraining his affianced wife to execute her promise. Envious and uncharitable people will think, and perhaps say, that the prospect of ultimately controlling her inheritance, as well as a very handsome capital which she was to receive from her mother's estate on her twenty-fifth birthday if married, and if not, on her subsequent wedding day, had some effect in stimulating his solicitude. She, however, was well aware that this capital could only be received on condition that her marriage should be approved by her father or guardian. According to her policy and usual practice, she had withheld this condition from her lover's knowledge, to whom she had told a part, the most pleasing part, so much as she thought expedient; gauging what she said by the impression which she wished to produce; making him believe, by the most ingenious manner, and apparently the greatest candour and frankness, that she was imparting all—that her mind was a wide-open book, and that she had communicated everything, even to the last iota, pertaining to the subject.

The Hon. Frank was ready to ask her father for Vivy's hand if she wished it, but pointed out the probability, which amounted almost to a certainty that Lady Merton, on account of her most unaccountable, and, as he expressed it, damned impertinent, dislike of him, would persuade Sir Henry to refuse. Vivy agreed with her lover as to the existence of this

probability, and the desirableness of not putting it to the test. He then urged a secret wedding, but his sweetheart objected that it might unfortunately happen that she should be married but once in her life, that this was justly considered a ceremonious occasion for an exhibition of the bride and of all that pertained to her, and she would not be wedded in a corner, or in the dark, as if she were not worth looking at or had nothing to show, with no company, no cake, and no cards.

Then the Hon. gentleman offered to run away with his love in the good old chivalrous style—a coach and four, postillions, outriders, whatever she would, and enough to make the world gape, and the newspapers go into ecstasies for, at least, all the time of the honeymoon. She would have none of it. Even were she to consent, so long as Lady Merton should be near her father, he would withhold his forgiveness, and, consequently, an allowance. And she proceeded to make clearer to the Hon. Mr. Glyder that the only obstacle to their being married in a respectable, elegant fashionable way, to their having a great wedding, and one to make all Rome writhe with envy, to their being soldered together by a blaze and a heat of glory as they should be—or she would remain a maid—to their receiving a princely revenue, as of right they ought, was Lady Merton. And she intimated that this obstacle must be removed as a condition precedent to her making any step in advance. As for her father—here she gave a significant toss of her head—she could manage him when once free from his wife's baleful influence

And now she touched on another reason for the

removal of this obstruction, which, the Hon. Frank readily admitted, might have its importance ; and this was nothing less than the patent fact that while it should continue to occupy its present position, no allowance from the paternal income could be expected, even if a paternal consent to the alliance might be procured. Not only did the Hon. Mr. Glyder admit the importance of the fact thus presented—he asserted its condemned nastiness. It had evidently entered his mind, and set all his powers of consideration at work. Clearly it interested him as a rare piece of domestic history. Its secret motives excited his curiosity, and he asked, with ill-suppressed impatience, why these things were so?

“Because papa is good-natured, and rather weak, and hates bother, and is very much in love with Lady Merton.”

“What has all that to do with it?”

“Everything. He has put his whole income into her hands.”

“Damnation !”

“Yes.”

“To do with as she pleases?”

“Exactly.”

“What a damned idiot!—excuse me.”

“I thank you. I never dared to say it myself. He is my father, you know.”

“And what *does* she do with the money?”

“What she likes.”

“Which is?”

“Who knows? But I mean to find out, or make papa think I have.”

“Do, by all means. And how do you propose to get rid of her?”

Vivy gave him the outline of her plan.

“Good! I will help you. Probably she has a cheque-book—of course she must have one—and it is likely that opposite each draft is a note of its amount and purpose. If so, you can learn much from this book. Get hold of it as soon as you can, and examine it thoroughly. This is the first step. And get her to write the address of your father’s London bankers for you, and give it to me; it may be useful. And—well—and this Don Foresti—can’t you get his autograph? I want it. When you bring me these, and exact information in regard to this cheque-book and her accounts, whether she keeps any in anyway or not, we will talk further of this business.”

Somehow “this business” seemed to have wrought a very marked change in Vivy’s lover. He was no longer lover-like, but masterful, spoke to, and told her what to do, as the head of a commercial house might direct a clerk. She had never felt so much respect for him as at this moment. There was a certain confidence in his tone, manner, and language, indicative of an intelligence that quickly grasped and would master the situation. On the other hand, Vivy’s activity and skill in accomplishing what he had pointed out as the first step, won his warm approbation. At their very next meeting she reported that Lady Merton used a cheque-book; that the only memoranda it contained were notes of balances remaining in bank after each draft, and that she kept no account, for, as the young lady scornfully said, “She never had anything to keep an account

of till she married papa, and so she does not know anything about it. She couldn't tell herself what she has done with half the money."

A few days after Vivy had made this report Don Foresti called to see Sir Henry and Lady Merton. Neither was at home. The servant said they went out together, and it was now near the time for them to be back. The priest wished, for an especial reason, to speak with them that afternoon, and, deciding to await their return, he was shown into Lady Merton's cabinet, half-boudoir, half-reception room, where she wrote letters, attended to such business as she had to transact, and occasionally received intimate friends. Don Foresti took from the table a book, and, as the light was rather dim—the day having already fallen low—sat at a window where he was partly hidden by the curtains. Presently he heard a soft, quick step, and the puling of silk flowing on the velvet carpet, and looked up, expecting to greet Lady Merton, but beheld instead her step-daughter. He was so struck by the peculiar intentness of the young lady's mien that he did not move. She went straight to the small, antique, richly-sculptured writing-desk, observing nothing else, opened it nervously, took out a cheque-book, tore out some cheques, put the book back in its place, returned to the door by which she had entered, and then :

"You have them?" said the Hon. Frank Glyder's voice, low, suppressed, yet easily recognised.

"There!" answered Vivy's voice. "Now go at once. They will be back."

She faced-about, still absorbed by one thought, went to the desk, examined it carefully to see whether

any trace of her visit could be discovered. Perceiving none, with a mind more at ease, attracted possibly by the earnestness of his regard, she turned, and her eyes encountered Don Foresti's motionless gaze. Her cheeks blanched, a look of mortal terror overspread her face, she caught at the back of a chair for support. This for a moment. Then, with marvellous readiness, getting the mastery over herself, she advanced with habitual ease and assurance, held out her hand to the priest, and greeted him warmly.

"How long have you been here?" she asked. "They did not tell me. Papa and mamma are out, but I expect them in shortly."

"I am waiting for them," said Don Foresti, gravely.

"You must have been here when I first came in ; but I was so much afraid I should make a mistake that I did not see anything. A man was waiting for some papers, and mamma told me to give them to him if he came. I am always nervous when I have any business to do, particularly if it is for mamma. She is so very exact, and it is so easy to do something wrong, especially for me, who am quite ignorant."

The priest had remained standing, with bent head and an unusually severe expression on his amiable countenance, while his soft eyes had in them a hard seriousness which the girl had never before noticed. As soon as she had finished speaking he took his leave, saying he could stay no longer, and would shortly again call to see Sir Henry and Lady Merton. The moment he was gone Vivy hurried to her room, locked the door, and threw herself, face downwards, on her bed, seeking to smother the

sickening terror by which she was possessed ; terror caused by the persuasion of prompt exposure. She was certain that Don Foresti had seen and heard all that she had done and said. It seemed to her now, as she thought of it, that Glyder had asked his question in a voice of thunder and she had answered with awful distinctness. The fact of this theft of cheques was known to the priest, and would be a key to all that should follow. How to prevent this ? She would not tell Glyder and ask his counsel ; she could not thus make known to him her unskilfulness, her untrustworthiness in such an undertaking as that in which they were engaged, her want of the most ordinary caution. He would regard her thereafter only with contempt.

For a time her brain was as though paralysed. She could devise no way to ward off the consequences of her imprudence ; she, who was commonly so fertile in expedients, and who justly felt so much confidence in herself. She turned over, but no inspiration came with the light. A mortal illness appeared to hold her as in a spell. She did not groan, nor weep, nor sigh, nor utter any sound, but lay pale and still, oppressed as by a horrible nightmare, with only a wild, haunted look in her eyes and the chalky whiteness of her face to indicate any great trouble.

Suddenly she sprang up to a sitting posture, and a smile of triumph broke over her countenance. She bounded to the floor, ran to the wardrobe for her hat and cloak, stopped short, looked at her watch, and exclaimed, " Too late for to-day ! " Then she walked to the window, began to hum an air, her mien and movements showing animation and excite-

ment, sat down, got up, walked back and forth the length of the room—could remain quiet in no position. By and by, however, she became calm enough to interest herself in a French novel till Sir Henry and Mary, who had been delayed, came home, both of whom she greeted with unusual warmth ; was remarkably cheerful all the evening, surprising Lady Merton by uncommon marks of affection for her.

The next morning, at an early hour, Vivy was ready for Mass. With the maid, her ordinary attendant, she went to S. Marcello. She knew that between eight and nine o'clock Don Foresti would be in that church hearing confessions. When her turn came she kneeled and, with sighs and the troubled voice of one who weeps, repeated the formal commencement of the rite, and immediately added, speaking with great volubility, that seeing him at their house the day before had suddenly made her sensible of sin that very day committed. And she went on to unfold a complete plot, formed by herself and a confederate, to disgrace and drive Lady Merton from her husband and from that husband's home. In pursuance of this plan the accomplice, who was remarkably clever with a pen, and could imitate almost any handwriting, was going to make some cheques in Lady Merton's name to the order of Don Foresti himself, endorse on them the priest's signature, provide that, at the right time, they should fall into Sir Henry's hands, and thus, with other evidence, cause it to appear that she was in the habit of giving large sums to the handsome churchman, that her relations with him would not bear the light, and that she had systematically abused her

husband's great confidence in her and misused his money for her own purposes and advantage. Vivy confessed further that she had tried to deceive the confessor in regard to her object when seen by him in Lady Merton's cabinet, that she really came there to get blank cheques for the confederate, who was waiting at the door for them, to be used as she had already indicated ; that she had previously shown him a cheque drawn by Lady Merton to pay a tradesman's bill, and let him copy it ; that she had given him her step-mother's autograph signature ; that she had also given him the address of their London bankers, written out for her by Lady Merton, who, she had told him, was in the habit of drawing on them for large remittances ; and she whimperingly declared that she repented bitterly of her share in the plot, but did not know how to undo it. The priest said her duty was plain enough, namely, to go at once and avow the whole matter to her father and step-mother. She replied that she was afraid to do so, lest the accomplice should be very angry, since he had undertaken to do this in order to help her ; that she was engaged to be married to this person, and he would certainly break off the engagement and go away from her if she should be so mean as to tell on him. The priest refused to give her absolution till she should have denounced her confederate and confessed all to her parents, thus giving evidence of sincere repentance, which he feelingly and solemnly exhorted her to do, and she left the confessional, having accomplished her intention, which was to seal the lips of Don Foresti as to what he had seen and all that might result therefrom.

On the last day of October Mr. Tellifer returned to Rome ; had passed the summer very pleasantly, but his journey to England had been useless. The "tracks" were not those of the animal that they wished to hunt. The second of November, the "Day of the Dead," he went in the morning to St. Peter's with Sir Henry and Lady Merton, who wished to hear the music. Mass was to be sung for "All the Faithful Departed."

Although Mary's motives had been curiosity and love of music, the influence of the service, like a spirit, entered and took possession of her, and to it she willingly surrendered. For her it was a beautiful and precious thought that we might still do good to our dear ones. She remembered her father with a passionate pang of love and dreadful apprehension. If this Catholic doctrine, the Christian doctrine, should after all be true ; if it represented realities ; ah, then, how gladly would she believe in a future state, where forgiveness and reconciliation were still possible, and could be forwarded by the prayers of affection. And Freddy ! How her heart went out anew in gratitude to Don Foresti for the masses and prayers he had offered on the dear child's account. Perhaps this weakness was partly caused by the searching harmonies, and especially by the *Dies Iræ*, that tremendous hymn which had always stirred and startled her like a prelude of the last trump. It was doubly terrible now, clothed with music absolutely in union with its spirit, heightening its dreadful effect, and, as it were, opening up a vision of the Last Judgment.

Lady Merton knew the hymn in its original Latin and now it was as if the soul of its composer

had entered into her. As she heard the appalling words—

*Judex ergo cum sedebit,
Quidquid latet, apparebit :
Nil inultum remanebit.*

she saw herself lying naked before the Judge, helpless, helpless, feeling the justice of that sentence which He might be about to pronounce against her ; which He must pronounce unless restrained by mercy. Shivering and shrinking, she heard a soprano voice, trembling, diminishing, fainting with awful terror, utter alone, alone, in a silence as of the dead—even the organ seemed to be breathless with dismay—these words :

*Quid sum, miser tunc dicturus,
Quem patronum rogaturus,
Cum vix justus sit securus ?*

And when the chorus took up the passionate entreaty—

*Ingemisco tanquam reus
Culpa rubet vultus meus :
Supplici parce, Deus.*

she bowed her head low, low, unconscious of observation, hardly knowing whether she were in or out of the body.

The great impression of this service had not been dissipated when, in the afternoon of the same day, she went with her husband and the American to the Campo Verano, the modern cemetery of Rome, adjoining the ancient church of S. Lorenzo fuori le mura. Crowds of citizens were going the same way, streaming through the Porta di S. Lorenzo, looking towards Tivoli and the mountains behind it. All were bearing flowers done into various emblematic

devices, of which by far the greater number were crowns and crosses, or garlands of oak or laurel leaves. The cemetery presented a lively appearance, quite opposite to its appropriate character. Thousands of people, persons of every class, were walking hither and thither in couples or in groups, viewing the monuments and floral decorations. The more open spaces looked like flower gardens, and the whole place had the air of a floricultural exhibition.

"It must be admitted, you know," remarked the Baronet, "that the financiers of the Roman Church, when they contrived the doctrine of purgatory, gave proof of notable ability; they did, indeed, you know."

"Did the financiers invent it?" asked Mr. Tellifer.

"Yes, in the Middle Ages, when they wanted more money, you know, and used all their cunning to squeeze it out of the people by every means, particularly by operating on their loves and fears."

"Yes! Well, let us see. I have looked into that. The first mention of an intermediate future state, or place, call it purgatory, or paradise, or Abraham's bosom, or what you will, that I have been able to find, and of prayers for the dead, is in the Bible."

"Now, you know, that is a little too strong. I have read the Bible somewhat, myself."

"Yes, the Protestant selections from it, and those through your Protestant spectacles. But if you look into it again, you may see that Jesus Christ, just before His death, said to the penitent thief, 'Verily I say unto thee, this day thou shalt be with me in Paradise'; and just after His resurrection, he said to Mary Magdalene, 'Touch me not; for I am not yet

ascended to my Father'; or, as the original Greek has it, 'I have not yet ascended to my Father.' Thus Christ is Himself authority for the fact that the penitent could not have been with Him to, or in, heaven, during any part of the time between the crucifixion and the resurrection. Paradise, therefore, named here, is not Heaven. As plainly is it not hell. St. Peter says, 'Christ . . . being put to death in the flesh . . . went and preached unto the spirits in prison . . . which sometime were disobedient.'"

"Ah, that is very blind, you know; very blind."

"Why, your creed says, 'He descended into hell.' What does your creed mean, and what do you mean when you say it? That He descended to 'the place of departed spirits.' Why? What had He to do there? If it was for His spirit to pass the time there till His resurrection, then that place of departed spirits is Paradise and not Heaven; for He did not ascend to His Father, and He did receive the penitent thief in Paradise."

"Really, now, that is to examine things too closely, you know."

"Plainly this 'place of departed spirits' was not Heaven. No private interpreter would be bold enough to make 'hell' a figure of speech signifying 'heaven.' If this was not Satan's own sea of fire and brimstone, the one and only Hell—and no person will dare even to imagine that—it was a place neither heaven nor hell, that is, an intermediate state, or place where, according to you and your creed, there were 'departed spirits.' Why were departed spirits there? How long are they to stay? What or who

is to determine the duration of their abode there? Is it eternal? Is this a third estate, neither heaven nor hell, and eternal? What is it if not a place of purgation for perfecting departed spirits?"

"I think you are prying into secrets, you know ; I do, upon my soul."

"Still, you prefer to believe that after Christ's crucifixion 'He descended into hell.' Wherefore? To preach to the spirits in prison? Why preach to the spirits in prison, if that prison was hell? They could not come out of it ; if they could come out repentant, or responding anyhow to the preaching, it would have become purgatory and been no longer hell. Now, not only did Christ speak of Paradise, and prove that it was a place different from Heaven, but He spoke of a 'world to come,' where sins might be forgiven. Remember that He did not speak rashly, nor use idle words. 'Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.' And Peter adds to what he had said before about preaching to the spirits in prison : 'For for this cause was the gospel preached unto them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.' And Paul says : 'Else what should they do which are baptised for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptised for the dead?'"

"That is one of Paul's things hard to be understood, you know."

"According to Protestantism, the dead are all either in heaven or in hell, and I myself should like to ask : 'Why were they, then, baptised for the dead?' Those

in heaven had no need of baptism, and those in hell could receive no profit therefrom. It was too late. To be baptised for them must have been an empty mockery. But, for the dead in purgatory, the efficacy of such an act would be obvious."

"I think you should ask what St. Paul means ; really, now, I do."

"The meaning of this passage and the reason and effect of the function mentioned, were evidently familiar knowledge with Christians in Paul's time. And this knowledge and doctrine were such as became traditional in the Church, helps to interpretation of the sacred writings, never fully committed to and not transmitted by any Scripture."

"Well, well," said Sir Henry, rather impatiently, "there is nothing, you know, in all this about prayer and sacrifice—they call their mass a sacrifice, I believe—for the dead."

"In second Maccabees you will find, after the account of how Judas Maccabæus sent twelve thousand drachmas of silver to Jerusalem 'for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead' slain in battle, these words : 'It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins.'"

"Really, if you will allow me to say so, that is rather weak ; it is, indeed, you know. The Maccabees are no part of the Bible."

"Of the mutilated Protestant Bible, no ; but of the un mutilated Catholic Bible, yes. And whether they be inspired, like the books held sacred by Protestants, or not, it is admitted on all hands that they are good, authoritative history. And here you have proof that

the Catholics were not the inventors of prayers for the dead, and that the disciples and the people among whom Jesus Christ lived, and to whom He spake, were acquainted with, and shared more or less in, this belief and practice. To this day the Jews have continued to pray for their dead ; and their authorised prayer-book contains formulas for such prayers. Now, as the dead cannot be baptised for themselves, and, as Paul says, the living are baptised for them, so they can no longer pray for themselves, and the living pray for them, that is, in their stead. Ah ! I had not observed whither we were tending. Here we are at the gate. Shall we turn back ? ”

“ No. I have had enough,” replied Sir Henry. “ Here is our carriage.”

Mary had not said a word, as she walked between the two gentlemen, during all this talk. She did not feel like opposing what Mr. Tellifer advanced, even could she have thought of any objection ; and on her husband’s account she was unwilling to signify her assent to, or approval of, the American’s arguments. When they were in the carriage Mr. Tellifer continued the conversation, without regard to the Baronet’s last words and their double meaning, by saying :

“ This doctrine of purgatory is a merciful one.”

“ How can you say that ? ”

“ In the first place, purgatory is on the way to heaven, and is *not* on the way to hell. Souls arrived at purgatory know that heaven is assured to them sooner or later, which must be a joy to counterbalance much pain. If you believe the Bible you are sure that no sin or impurity can enter heaven. Therefore

by Protestant doctrine, a person dying guilty of ever so small a fault must be given over to death eternal ; while, by Catholicism, he may be purged after death and cured. The patient is happy in his purgation, because he knows himself to be getting well, well for ever and ever. Hating his disease, he will gladly undergo any treatment by which he may be freed from it entirely and for eternity. Besides, he is filled with gratitude because his sufferings are so much less than, as he is now aware, his offences deserve."

"Oh, well, now you are guessing, you know. Excuse me, but you really are."

"Inferences, opinions, conclusions, my dear sir, warranted—but one or two more facts in regard to the doctrine. As you prefer to believe it was the mouth of God which said, 'And that servant who knew the will of his lord,' and so forth, 'shall be beaten with many stripes ; but he that knew it not,' and so forth, 'shall be beaten with few stripes.' Now, how could he be beaten with few stripes in hell, I should like to know? The same awful Authority says in another place that the lord of an unforgiving servant 'delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due him. So likewise shall your Heavenly Father do also unto you, if you forgive not,' and so forth. Furthermore, 'The Son of Man when He comes in the glory of His Father will reward every man according to his works.' Would it be according to their respective works to sentence him, who has failed in the least, to hell with the most persistent, horrible, unrepentant sinner, even with Satan himself? John says : ' He that knoweth his brother to sin a sin which is not unto death

let him ask, and life shall be given him who sinneth not unto death. There is a sin unto death; for that I say not that any man ask.' You may find abundant evidence in the Fathers of the continuance of this doctrine and practise from the first, if you will. And you may find in any authorised exposition of Catholic doctrine what the Church says in regard to satisfaction for the temporal punishment due to sin, after the eternal punishment has been remitted through the merits and atonement of Jesus Christ, and also the whole doctrine of Penance."

But Sir Henry had listened to quite enough on this subject, and he contrived, rather abruptly, though, to change the conversation.

"Oh, dear!" he yawned, as soon as he was alone with Lady Merton, "that fellow is a terrible bore sometimes; he really is, you know. I almost wished him in his delightful purgatory; I did indeed, you know."

But the next day he gave the American a hearty invitation to go with them to Tivoli, and to visit Hadrian's Villa.

Mr. Teller excused himself on the ground of a necessary trip to Naples, and perhaps, to Sicily.

XX.

SOME time had passed since Vivy regained her self-respect, and exorcised the malignant fear that possessed her by confessing to, and thus closing the mouth of, Don Foresti. In all the exultant consciousness of having made a stroke of genius which would paralyse the most efficient defender of Lady Merton, in the coming struggle, she had hastened to the rendezvous, and with much glee told her lover what she had done, and received his felicitations, with the assurance that she had achieved something devilishly clever, and that every day would seem a year to him till he could legally own her. Then there appeared to be a reflux of his mind, which, not kept within bounds by a knowledge of Roman Catholic discipline, caught up in its sweep a sudden and harassing doubt. He asked, with visible uneasiness :

“And what surety have you that this priest will not run to Lady Merton and peach?”

“Oh, he dares not do such a thing. A priest can't tell, or even hint, at what, or the least part of what, he has found out in the confessional. If he did it would be a dreadful sin. It is as if he never heard it.”

“What nonsense! Such a rule, if observed, must keep the priests from doing a great deal of good, especially in some cases——”

“Like this! Oh, no. You must remember that the confession is made to God, not to the priest, who is only a minister to declare God's counsels, and refuse

or pronounce His absolution ; and it would be an awful impertinence and impiety for the priest to act like a sneaking eavesdropper, and make known secrets which are told to God only, and which He will reveal in His own good time and way, or not at all. There have been very bad priests, who have shown themselves to be bad after having heard many confessions, and there have been priests who have become crazy after having heard the secrets of many penitents, yet some mysterious power has always kept them from ever telling what they had heard in the confessional. And there have been priests who were martyred—put to death, you know—because they would not tell what the penitent confessed.”

“Where did you get all this?”

“They told me first in the convent, but here everybody knows it.”

“You are a d——d sharp little theologian, smart enough to make some use of your theology, and so prove its orthodoxy ; and you have made religion useful as well as ornamental.”

Some weeks later, on a hint from the Hon. Mr. Glyder that the snare was laid and it was time to commence working the game towards it, if she wished to precipitate matters, Vivy, finding herself alone with the Baronet, began her approaches.

“Why do you never have any more money, papa?”

“Because I do not need any more, my dear.”

“But I need some, and you can’t give it me.”

“You must ask Lady Merton.”

“Why should I ask her?”

“Because she has it.”

“And does as she pleases with it?”

- "Certainly."
- "Spending as much as she likes?"
- "To be sure."
- "Buying whatever she wants?"
- "Of course."
- "Without asking you?"
- "Without even consulting me, unless she wishes my advice."
- "You are satisfied with this?"
- "Absolutely."
- "And don't know how much she spends?"
- "No."
- "Nor for what she spends it?"
- "In a general way, I suppose."
- "Nor how much she gives away?"
- "She gives as she thinks best."
- "Nor to whom she gives?"
- "What do you mean by all these questions?"
- "The money is all yours, isn't it?"
- "Hers and mine."
- "Because you give it to her. How much is it?"
- "I have not yet heard."
- "How much was it last year?"
- "I have forgotten."
- "Does she know?"
- "Possibly."
- "Then why doesn't she tell you?"
- "Probably because I do not ask her."
- "I wish you would ask her."
- "Why?"
- "To see what she will say. You ought to have the money yourself."
- "I have all I want."

"To let me have some."

"Lady Merton will give you what is needful."

"Oh, I hate to ask her ; and she says she can't."

"For what do you want it ?"

"A pearl necklace. I know where there is a beauty. Lady Emily has one."

"And what does Lady Merton say ?"

"That it can't be afforded. Oh, papa, I wish you would let me have it."

"Well, I will speak to Lady Merton."

"Thanks, papa ; thanks awfully."

Accordingly Sir Henry told his wife of Vivy's wish.

"We cannot do it now," said Mary ; "I find that I have not so much in bank here by thousands of lire as I thought I had ; I suppose some mistake was made in the reckoning, though where and how I cannot discover. And yesterday I received notice from the London house that the account there is overdrawn ; but why they should write just now I am unable to guess, for it is two months, at least, since I drew on them. I can only explain it by supposing a falling off in income."

Of course Sir Henry could not elucidate the matter. The fact, however, did not disturb him greatly. He merely said :

"In this case, my dear, Vivy will have to do without the pearls, you know. We must economise till the balance is righted."

"The payment for that picture which you bought at Blanco's sale was a heavy draft on the money here."

"Of course, my love, of course ; but the painting is

worth ten times what I bid for it. There is nothing to do but economise."

And so the matter seemed to be settled. Vivy appeared not to take it very much to heart when told by her father that, for the present, she must do without the necklace. She drew in her chin and turned on him one of her peculiar leers, while a cold light flashed in her eyes, and only said :

"I thought so."

The Baronet gave a sharp, enquiring glance at his daughter, as if in her answer he perceived some dim innuendo, the full purport of which he would seize. But she began to hum the popular air of an *opera bouffe*, and left the room.

Just at this time fortune seemed to favour Vivy in the prosecution of her scheme. Don Foresti, knowing by experience the charitable disposition and generosity of Lady Merton, called on her one morning to solicit help for a woman whose case was especially pitiable.

"She is," said he, "the widow of an unhappy young artist. He had the misfortune to possess original genius of a grand and sombre kind ; his paintings did not suit the taste of ordinary picture-buyers, and his name did not make them fashionable, for he was unknown. Extraordinary buyers were rare, and nobody directed them to the neglected youth's studio."

"Ah, poor fellow !" said Mary, "I know how he felt."

"With faith in himself, and the imprudence which is apt to be a characteristic of persons like him, he had married an orphan girl, who had no dowry but her virtues and her uncommon beauty. I gave them

the nuptial benediction, and not long afterwards lost sight of them altogether."

"Could you not have encouraged him by sympathy and appreciation?"

"I did, but he needed a kind of encouragement that it was not in my power to give."

"What became of him?"

"This morning, news of the woman he married was brought to me. It seems that he had worked with great ardour and industry for a while, striving to hope still, and not give way to despondency and despair. But he could not sell his pictures, and at length was unable to pay the rent of a studio, which he had hitherto done with some inherited money. The fact that he had been turned out of his *atelier* seemed to prey upon him, and paralyse his imagination. He could paint no more. Meantime two children had been born to him within two years, and to obtain shelter and food for them, and for his wife, whose health was plainly failing, through privation and anxiety, he tried to find employment as a day-labourer."

"How sad!"

"While searching for work fruitlessly, he sold all the paintings he had for shamefully mean prices, in order to support his family. Finally he got work on the bridge that they were then building, but his muscles had not been hardened, and he was moreover weak from want of sufficient nourishment, and this condition brought upon him cutting and brutal reproofs from the superintendent. One day, stung by jeering, contemptuous words, he exposed himself recklessly, and fell from a beam into the Tiber's ravenous current."

“And was drowned?”

“Yes. To his widow, declining in health, as I have said, the news of his death was almost mortal. As soon as it appeared that she was not going to die of the blow, her children and herself were turned out of the apartment which they had occupied, and of which she could not pay the rent, and were received where they now are, through the owner’s charity, himself a poor man, who can hardly make both ends meet. You may imagine how much the sensitive creature has suffered. She was so ill, that, to get her out of his apartment, the landlord was obliged to have her carried. All their little belongings, all their clothes even, except what were necessary for such modesty as the very poor can afford to keep, were sold to procure food and medicine. It is a wonder that she yet lives. Will you go to see her?”

“Certainly, and at once, if you can show the way.”

They walked across the Tiber, to a dim alley in the poorer part of Trastevere, and entered a low basement room, of which the wet, uneven floor, was several feet below the street pavement. There, on a worn mattress of straw, in the dryest corner, lay an emaciated young woman, scarcely more than a girl. One ragged sheet was all the bed furniture, besides the mattress, which rested on the floor. Two small children, pale, pinched, famished, awed into forgetfulness of their own pains by the mother’s condition, were sitting on the miserable bed, the younger leaning its head on the maternal bosom, and the elder clinging to her mother’s hand. Poor and hungry people in the immediate neighbourhood had furnished daily food enough to keep them from death by starvation.

The woman's right arm was around the younger child, and she seemed holding them to her, as though she feared a forcible separation. Her eyes were unnaturally large and bright, her long, heavy hair was tangled about her shoulders. Every few minutes a fit of coughing exhausted her. The room was dark, and moisture stood in drops, like sweat, on the walls. It contained no articles of furniture, save the misnamed bed on which the woman lay, and a sort of stool, which might, at need, serve for chair or table.

Learning that a dry and comfortable room could be had in the same building, Mary at once hired it, paying a term in advance ; and to this, with the help of some kind neighbours, she removed the sick mother and her children. She provided for their most urgent wants, and, when leaving, gave a liberal donation in money to the sufferer, promising to send a doctor in the course of the day, a woman to care for her and the children, and to return herself the next morning.

Then Lady Merton went home. When Sir Henry came in she told him about her charitable visit. But he was used to hearing such histories from his wife ; was thinking of something that had occurred at the hunt, of which he was impatient to give her an account ; hardly knew what she said, except that somebody was ill, and asked no questions.

Now, it so happened that as Don Foresti and Lady Merton were leaving the house together, Vivy saw them. She was already dressed to go out, and she followed at a distance, saw them enter an obscure alley, and go into an old, rather disreputable-looking

building. She noticed the number on it, which was 13, and the name of the alley, *Vicolo della Gabbia*. She fixed these facts in her memory, and then hastened away, lest she should be seen and recognised playing the spy.

In the afternoon of that very day Lady Merton went out to pay some visits, and Vivy took advantage of the desired opportunity to examine her step-mother's desk, in search of anything which she might turn to account, or, at least, would improve her knowledge of that lady's private matters. And there, in plain light, not even indicating a purpose of concealment, was a receipt for rent of a room in the building No. 13, *Vicolo della Gabbia*, for so many months. The girl's heart leaped with the feeling of a gamester when he sees victory assured, and her fingers closed on the paper, affording her a sensation almost as pleasant as she would have enjoyed had those same fingers closed on Lady Merton helpless. She exulted in the belief that her step-mother was now in her power. With this card in her hand she could control and surely win the game. And she proceeded at once to put the document into a secret and secure place, sacred to herself.

A day or two later, improving another opportunity, when alone with her father, Vivy suddenly asked :

"How much did those tapestries cost?"

"Really, my dear, I do not know."

"Didn't you buy them?"

"Lady Merton bought them."

"In her own name?"

"I suppose so. Why?"

"I only wanted to know ; they must have cost a lot

of money, an awful lot ; and all these old paintings, and the antique church books with miniatures in them, and the illuminated 'Hours of the Virgin,' and the other rare and beautiful books, and the bric-à-brac, and the ivory statuettes, and the paintings on enamel, and— Oh, I understand enough about such things to know that all this cost thousands and thousands of pounds, and I can't have money enough to clothe me properly."

"But, my child, it was necessary to furnish our apartment."

"All this is not furniture. And the furniture itself is extravagant, much of it needless, and cost other thousands and thousands ; the exquisite antique pieces, and the sculptured and inlaid, and the embroideries, and the curtains, each worth a small fortune."

"It was a great economy to have our own furniture, instead of hiring it ; and all this is worth much more than it cost."

"Who says so ?"

"Everybody. And Lady Merton made the estimates. In a few years enough will be saved by buying to pay for it all."

"Yes, she says so, and she does not say what it costs ; and she gets the most expensive, and she buys it in her own name. And it is not *your* furniture, and *you* will not make a saving on it. That's all right, though, if you are satisfied. It's the way the money went then, and there was enough to do all that. But it does not go for that now. What does it go for ? And how does it go ? And that painting, that *Perugino*, which you bought and *she*

paid for with your money, stands in her name. I saw the bill myself."

"Well, what of that? It is all the same."

"Is it? She is younger than you, papa, and she is healthy, and she expects to outlive you, and she is reckoning now upon your death, and she intends to invest as much of your money as she can in her own name, and when you are dead she expects quietly to take possession of all as her own, and sell what she wants to, and keep what she wants to, and get rich on what she takes from you in this way, and rob us, your children, whom she pinches and deprives of necessities, that she may place the money in her own name, and have it to give——"

"For shame! How dare you speak so of my wife? Is a costly pearl necklace *necessary, absolutely necessary* for you?"

"Rather, as your daughter. Oh, I know some things. What are necessities depends upon the wealth and social position of persons; what are necessities for me, as your daughter, considering your income, could not have been necessities for *her* with *her* income before you married her——"

"Silence! I have listened to you longer than I ought. Your insinuations and open charges are as unfounded and impertinent as they are malicious and unjust. Lady Merton has, and deserves, my fullest confidence. You will please never renew this kind of conversation, and never dare to utter again such accusations. Go to your room."

Vivy heard this reproof and command without wincing, flung her head, holding it very erect, and with nostrils distended and looks of defiance, went out.

Notwithstanding the Baronet's injunction, before many days his daughter advanced again to the attack, but on another side.

She was walking with her father and they met Don Foresti.

"I wonder if he is going to see mamma?" said she, when he had passed.

Something in the tone with which this query was uttered grated on Sir Henry, and he asked :

"What makes you think so?"

"Because he comes so often. He pretends that it is to convert her."

"To convert her? How?"

"Why, to make a Roman Catholic of her."

"Pshaw!"

"I have heard them talking about it, and he has asked me to help him."

In speaking thus far Vivy had lied four times.

"If he really ever attempts anything of that kind let me know, and I will forbid him the house—I will, upon my soul."

This would not have suited Miss Merton. She found a certain excitement and pleasure in being with the priest since, by her confession, she had made him privy to, and, as she chose to feel, a kind of helpless accomplice in, the plot woven by her lover and herself; and she treated him with a noticeable air of confidence, having even a shade of intimacy, suggesting a secret understanding between them, which was intolerable to poor Don Foresti. Besides, she sought occasions to continue on him the exercise of her peculiar fascinations, partly because she thought him a very handsome man, and a favourite with her step-mother

and partly for the reason that he was a priest, and she could put him out of countenance, as she very frankly told someone.

"I think mamma gives him money," she said softly, watching her father with one of those side looks, to note and be guided by the effect of her words.

"Money? For what?"

"Oh, for something charitable, in which he is interested, and—and—for himself, perhaps. You know they are all poor as rats."

"What makes you think so?" demanded Sir Henry, restraining his irritation.

"Once I saw her give him a cheque——"

"That was for an illuminated book which she had asked him to buy."

"Oh, was it?" returned Vivy, in a tone which meant to say that it was for anything but that. "Ah, well, you do not know how much your income is, or what is done with it; you have no control over it and are kept in absolute ignorance about it. Only when you want to do something for one of your children you are told that there is no money. But why, or what has become of it, is not explained. I think, papa, that you are doing your children a great wrong. And there is a very easy way to find out whether your confidence has been abused; look over the cheques she has drawn, but do it secretly."

"Vivy!"

The suggestion of this underhand proceeding shocked all his notions of honour.

"Why not? If everything is right she will never find out anything about it, and will not be hurt by knowing that we——"

“We?”

“Well, *I* have suspected her, and, if it turns out that there is ground for my suspicions, it is no matter whether she is hurt or not. Oh, you’ll do it, papa, spite of your scruples, because you *ought* to do it, and it is the best way.”

They had now reached the house whither Vivy was going, and her father, leaving her, continued his walk, meditating. And he began to query, Could there possibly be any truth in what Vivy had said? Was he the victim of an over-credulous faith in his wife? She could have done all that the girl had charged or implied, and much more, with every opportunity and no restriction, had she been so disposed.

When the Baronet repassed the place where he had left his daughter, she had made her visit and was waiting for him.

“Haven’t you seen the crucifix in mamma’s room?” she asked abruptly, as they walked. “I have, and I caught her kissing it. Do you know she worships the Virgin? I do. I have heard her when she thought she was alone. But where does the money go? Look at her cheques. And Don Foresti could tell something. Why does she go to S. Marcello when he is hearing confessions? Why does she kneel at his box, as I have seen her, unless it is to confess, or to arrange meetings with him——”

“What!”

“Didn’t you know it? Don’t you know that she is out every morning, as she says to walk? Don’t you know that then she either goes to Mass, or to meet Don Foresti, or both? Don’t you know that Don Foresti never comes to see you in the evening, when

you are generally at home, but in the daytime, when you are generally away. Didn't he ask me in the confessional when mamma was alone?"

Sir Henry was too much disturbed to reflect that this must be an atrocious lie; that, if Vivy's words pointed at any truth, Don Foresti would have directed that question to Lady Merton. He had little trust in his daughter's veracity, but he remembered now the tender devotion of his wife's manner towards the priest, which Vivy had noticed, and wondered that he had not remarked its signification before.

"But look at the cheques," continued Miss Merton; "look at the cheques. See how much money she has spent. See if she has invested it for herself, or has given it to Don—to Catholics."

Only a few days earlier the Baronet had sternly blamed this girl for talking in a similar strain. Now he had listened, with many unuttered protests and reproofs it is true, but he had listened, and she had not been reprimanded. He could hardly believe that his child was so depraved as to invent all he had heard; some part of it might be true. Having noted the effect which she wished at that time to produce, Vivy walked on in silence, and her father was too busy with his thoughts to speak. He left his daughter at home, but did not stop there himself. He wanted to think, to examine, and not to meet Lady Merton—not just then. The charges and insinuations in regard to her perversion had not produced much effect. They were simply too incredible. Besides, he preferred to believe, if there was any truth in this part of the accusation, that she was fascinated by the priest. That *was* possible.

He had heard that these smooth-faced, oily-tongued fellows were up to that sort of trick. And if she had married him for money, as a cool and base speculation, had never loved him, her heart was empty, and she could not be so scrupulous as not to open it to that handsome, insinuating, soft-voiced, earnest-eyed, gown-wearing hypocrite.

All this questioning and reasoning only served to increase the Baronet's incertitude. To unravel his perplexity more easily he entered a restaurant and poured brandy on it, as he would have wet a tangled cord to undo it with less difficulty. Strive as he might, he could not keep out of his mind the unwelcome, obtrusive thought that his wife was "carrying things with rather a high hand." He reflected that he himself knew nothing of his own affairs, and severely blamed his indolence and dislike of "worry." Whether his revenue had increased or diminished, whether there had been losses or gains, he was profoundly ignorant. He had trusted his wife implicitly, saying that he much preferred not to be bothered by the incidents of business. He could in any event do nothing but receive the income furnished by the trustees, and this Mary could do as well as himself. But if Vivy's suspicions were well founded; if his wife, profiting by his negligence, had misspent his money; worse and more impossible, if she had been giving it to Roman Catholics, to a Roman Catholic, to a lover! No! he would not believe that! And yet—if she had been counting on his death? But all this was so opposed to his Mary as he had known her!. Yet the thought persistently came back: "It was so easy for her to do this, and

make herself rich, independent of him, whose great pleasure had been to feel that he was her providence. Would not such action on her part account for the overdraft in London, and the diminished balance in Rome?"

By help of the stimulant he now first perceived that his wife had been doing for some time as if the fortune were hers, giving to charities in her own name, and deciding many things without consulting him. Only now did he note, and take it to heart, that all the many appeals for alms, and for aid in beneficent works, were addressed to her. His very existence was ignored. Surely there was some reason for this.

But by-and-by he became softer, there was a reaction, and the husband grew tender and pitiful towards his wife. It was all a mistake; there could be no basis of fact. Vivy was full of fancies. He would stake his life on Lady Merton's probity, honour, fidelity, candour. She was his unchanged Mary, who had always been his good angel, and so forth. He left the restaurant, and, hastening home, greeted his wife with an extraordinary show of affection.

Yet a ceaseless contest went on between his old, constant love for and habitual, complete confidence in Lady Merton and the ever-increasing host of assailing suspicions provoked and marshalled, more or less openly, by Vivy. And he was not enough master of himself and of dissimulation to conceal changes of feeling from Mary, especially when in its oscillations his mood was opposed to her, and he had nerved himself and quickened his cunning by extra potations.

Unable even to guess their cause, such changes greatly distressed her ; but in vain she begged of her husband an explanation. He affected to treat the whole matter, whenever he saw fit to reply, as a figment of her imagination. He could not yet bring himself to follow his daughter's advice, or take action.

Vivy's paramount design, for the time, in carrying forward the scheme agreed upon with her lover, was to constrain the Baronet to examine Lady Merton's cheques, and thus discover those which would incriminate her. It should be said, in fairness, that the girl was ignorant enough to believe that the preparation of these cheques was a practical joke, with a very serious practical purpose, to be sure ; "awful good fun," for all that, involving no crime, except that of stealing the blanks from her step-mother's cheque-book.

But Sir Henry was slow, his daughter and her partner impatient, and she resolved to use what she considered her strongest incentive.

The next time that her father was with her alone she abruptly asked :

"Have you examined mamma's cheques?"

"Of course not. Why do you persist in that silly notion?"

"Because you would find something interesting. Have you noticed that Don Foresti has not been here lately?"

"I had not remarked it."

"Well, he has not ; and I know the reason why."

"What is it?"

"Because he can see the one he wants to without coming."

"What do you mean?"

"While you were gone to the meet yesterday did you know mamma went out?"

"She told me so."

"Did she say where she went?"

"Really, now, I don't remember. Why do you ask?"

"Just to know. I thought she wouldn't speak of it."

"Why not?"

"Oh, I thought so. Did she mention what she went for?"

"Well, you know, I did not ask her. Why all this questioning? I believe it was to see some of her sick folk."

"Was it? Oh, yes, very sick."

"What do you mean? If you have anything to say, or information to give——"

"It's no matter. Only I thought you might like to know."

"Know what?"

"I suppose it is all right, but it looks queer."

"What is all right? What looks queer? Why don't you speak out?"

"Because you do not seem to care. You had rather hunt foxes on the Campagna."

"Vivy, tell me instantly and plainly what you are trying to insinuate."

"Only that yesterday, after you were gone, mamma went to see Don Foresti."

"How do you know that?"

"I followed, and saw her go to a house in Trastevere."

"Well?"

"Where I once saw them go together."

"You did?"

"Where she has a room——"

"Nonsense!"

"She has, I am sure of it."

"What for?"

"What should it be for, except to have a place where she can see Don Foresti without it being known?"

"You are an impudent girl!"

"May be; but I am not a fool."

"I believe you are telling a wicked, slanderous, infamous lie."

"Oh, well, then, go to the house and see for yourself."

"I?"

"Yes. Or if you don't want to do that look at her old cheques. You will probably find evidence of other payments like this." And she drew the receipt for rent from her pocket.

The Baronet took and read the paper.

"Is it possible?" he exclaimed in a subdued tone. And a little after he added, "I will keep this, it belongs to Lady Merton. How did you come by it?"

"I found it lying on the floor, and thought you might like to see it."

"Very well."

"But you ought to look at the cheques, it is no trouble. You would only have to visit the bank, and you surely would find something."

"What makes you think so?" Sir Henry was weakening in his opposition to this suggestion.

“A few days ago mamma gave a cheque to Don Foresti. They thought nobody saw them, but I did, though I couldn’t hear what was said, they talked so low. You will only find out how much money has gone that way by examining the cheques.”

Shortly after the Baronet dismissed his daughter. He wanted to be alone, to collect his thoughts, if possible, to arrive at some decision. If he had carried that receipt to Mary all might yet have been well. But the work of suspicion had gone too far.

The first step that he determined to take was a consultation with Mr. Pocus. But he would speak only about the expenditure of money—it should not be known that he had any other occasion for uneasiness; the real cause of his distress must not be even suspected. He had lent his sympathy to the banker, and would have lent his money, had he held command of it himself. Of this the Hebrew Christian was well aware, and he naturally thought it a reversal of the eternal fitness of things that Lady Merton should manage the purse of her husband. A wife’s purse was made to be controlled vicariously, but a husband’s—ah, my grazious!

For a reason which Sir Henry could neither ascertain nor divine, some days before their last departure from Rome, Mr. Pocus’s visits had suddenly ceased. He did not come to bid them good-bye; and since their return he had not been seen sharing the hospitality and giving religious instruction to the mistress of the Baronet’s princely house.

When, therefore, this gentleman presented himself to the banker in his private office, it was natural that he should allude to the above-mentioned fact. Mr.

Pocus pricked up his ears, adjusted an invisible mask, looked intently at a figure in the carpet, as though with fixed attention were combined hard thought, and thus, without seeming to do so, avoided meeting his client's eye. When, after premising that he was about to speak in the strictest confidence, Sir Henry had, with some circumlocution, set forth the reason of his visit and a cause of solicitude, namely, that his income was spent very freely, very fast, in fact, the banker's eyes brightened, and his attention was relaxed enough to permit of his looking Sir Henry in the face.

Yes, he had noticed, he could not help noticing, that the money went fast, very fast ; but he could not pretend to know where it went to, or what it went for. That was not his business. Money would go, ah, my gracious ! that was its nature, especially when a woman held the whip and reins. And the faster it went the more they laid on the lash. It was their way, and he did not know any help for it, but to let somebody else drive. If Lady Merton wished to get rid of the responsibility and trouble, the Baronet might count upon him to make the needful disbursements ; all bills could be sent to him, and so forth. He would willingly undertake the labour, if it would be a convenience to his good friend. And, as for himself, whenever he acted in any fiduciary capacity or handled other people's money, he insisted, insisted positively on having his accounts frequently examined, yes, frequently, as an act of justice, and really of kindness to himself. They might find something—yes, it might be that they should find something later.

“ And, my dear,” he continued, “ excuse me, my dear, but I would at least forbid that priest, that Don

Foresti, the house, though it does not seem to have anything to do with the question—at present ; yes, I would, my dear.”

“For what reason ?” asked Sir Henry, dreading to hear the answer.

“Because, my dear, because, in the dispositions of Lady Merton I should fear her perversions ; yes, I should, my dear.” There was a marked and malicious emphasis on the word “perversions.” And he went on to say that if he could be of the least assistance to his good friend he should only be too happy, and was always quite, yes, quite at his service.

Unfortunately the banker’s advice in regard to Don Foresti could not be acted on ; since that person had suddenly left Rome for Florence the day before, and might be absent some time.

The Baronet’s trouble was increased rather than diminished by the visit to Mr. Pocus ; the suspicions which he had hoped would be allayed were aggravated, and consequently the flux and reflux of his judgment and mood were augmented in violence. More and more frequently he threw out, in a tone of bitterness, insinuations and innuendos which Mary could not understand. To her heart, however, they had a fearful signification, nothing less than that of forerunners implying a most lamentable change in her husband’s affection and some terrible accusation against herself. Sir Henry, the actual object of her supreme devotion, was plainly irritated against her ; and his irritation grew daily. Her only comforter was Vivy, who, tenderer than ever, more caressing and sympathetic, told her she must not mind papa, because he was so sometimes, and it would soon all pass away.

XXI.

WHILE the relations between Sir Henry and Lady Merton were in this critical state, Mr. Tellerer returned from his trip to Naples. His coming was a pleasure, and in some measure a relief to both parties, to Mary particularly. She had absolute trust in the American's justice, fairness, and rectitude. The very idea of his magnanimity was a support. She had no thought of taking him into her confidence, making him the recipient of her anxieties and fears, much less of telling him that she awaited some, she could not guess what, dreadful wrong at the hands of her husband. Against the man to whom her faith had been plighted no murmur should ever reach any ears other than his own. All this thing, whatever it might be, was her lord's, as well as her own—between them, and them only. It was too sacred, too mournful, and, perhaps, too mortifying for exposure to common eyes, a matrimonial secret. Speaking of her own share would be the betrayal of her husband's. Nevertheless, she had a comforting sense that the forces of justice and right in the threatened contest would be strengthened by the presence of this friend.

He spoke of the pleasure he had in being with them again, referred to what he chose to call their

theological investigations, and asked Lady Merton abruptly, when they were alone together, why she did not join the Roman Church, adding that he would do so if he could accept the premises of the general, the whole Christian argument, to which question she gave this answer :

"I will tell you frankly what I have said to no one else. I am nearly convinced that the Roman is the true and, strictly speaking, the only Church. Were I alone in the world, I probably might join it. But I cannot think of taking such a step so long as Sir Henry lives. He is the central sun of my system, and I am a sun-worshipper. I have not, with him, felt the need of any religion. This is lamentable, I suppose, but I cannot help it. The Christian Deity seems to me like a fixed star, very cold and very far off, except when I am moved by bereavement, or by the rites and music of the Catholic Church. If I did feel the need of this Catholic faith, so long as my husband holds to his present views and feelings, I could not profess it. Such an act would greatly distress him, and would, in fact, separate us irreparably. And you know what all this would be to me. No, I cannot think of it now."

Mr. Tellifer's love of the square, plummet and balance in reasoning compelled him to reply, though he did not feel toward Mary as an antagonist in argument, and he spoke very gently :

"There might be a question also, whether the Roman Church would receive you till you ceased to 'love your husband more than me.'"

Very lately, Lady Merton's apprehensions had been increased by a renewal of the banker's visits, not

to herself, but to the Baronet. Indeed, there was an ostentatious show of the fact that Mr. Pocus practically ignored the mistress in her own home, and this insolence, permitted or not noticed by Sir Henry, was to her very bitter. Knowing the Hebrew Christian, as she did, to be mean and meanly revengeful ; aware also of the reason why his attendance on herself and his zeal to guard against her perversion to Catholicism had suddenly come to an end, she argued that his interviews with her husband boded her no good.

The frequent presence, likewise, of the Hon. Mr. Glyder was abhorrent. Her antipathy to him had increased rather than diminished. Convinced that at least two subtle, serpent-like enemies, in the confidence of Sir Henry, invaded her house, her drawing-room, her closet, and she knew not how much of her secret life, all the powers of conscious innocence in all respects, of fidelity, perfect loyalty, and entire devotion to her husband, could not drive away the vague terror which haunted her, of which the most distinct part was a dread that his love might be turning to hate, nor give her even momentary tranquillity.

A theological dispute between Mr. Pocus and Mr. Tellerfer was inevitable, meeting as they did at the Baronet's table. The Christian Hebrew wished to signalise his Christianity, that is, his Anglicanism, in the presence of his host and client, and lost no possible opportunity for throwing down the glove. On the other hand, as is known, the American was always ready, with lance in rest, to spur at any challenger who should choose to make the ecclesiastical question a subject of contest, as the champion of logic, consistency, and common-sense in religion.

"It is perfectly well established," said Mr. Pocus, "and may be known by anybody who will read history, that the Anglican is the original Church, and the Roman an exaggerated and corrupted imitation."

"That is so," affirmed the Hon. Mr. Glyder, wishing to conciliate the Baronet whenever, and as much as, he could.

"You probably will admit," Mr. Pocus went on, "that the British Church had an independent existence long before Augustine's mission and attempt to subject it to the Bishop of Rome."

"I may admit that, for the sake of the argument only. But I will be silent for the present as to whether that ancient British was the modern English Church."

"Ah, my grazious ! but that is plain. The Anglican liturgy is essentially the same with that of the ancient Church, and it has preserved the original form. What would you have more ?"

"If I admitted this much, I would say in reply : only the preservation of the living essence and spirit, the soul and the blood, the antique doctrine, all that makes the characteristics of a Church. Why, your modern Anglican Church, if it had the ancient liturgy and the original form, would resemble the ancient, which, to all intents and purposes, was identical with the Roman, as a manikin with glass eyes, vested fashionably, resembles a man in whom is the breath of life and the light of heaven."

"Well, now, you know," remarked Sir Henry, "we have all the Primitive Christian Doctrine, and the Christian dress for our clergy."

"One moment, if you please. The question now is

whether you have the doctrine of the Ancient British Church ; and I affirm that you have not ; that the Ancient British Church would have cast you out as heretical and abominable, deniers of the Body and Blood of the Lord. You have rejected the Sacrifice of the mass, and the real presence in the Eucharist, 'not discerning the Lord's Body,' as well as the sacraments of penance, extreme unction, and so forth."

"Of course, of course, to bring our Church back to its original purity."

"Exactly! Well, I have looked into the Ancient British Church, and you may do so too by going to the Cambrian Archæological Association. That Ancient British Church had monks and monasteries and nuns ; saints and miracles ; a liturgy in the Latin instead of the British tongue ; invocation of saints ; devotion to the Virgin, even a 'Lent of Mary' ; veneration of saints' relics, carried to an extraordinary degree ; prayers for the dead, and the doctrines of purgatory ; the mass, 'a pure oblation,' 'the divine sacrifice' ; fasting ; auricular confession ; use of the holy chrism ; veneration for the Pope, the chair of St. Peter, the tombs of Sts. Peter and Paul, and for the city of Rome, and pilgrimages to them."

"Well, now really," said Sir Henry, with unusual feeling, "I think all these archæological associations, and archæologists, and archæology ought to be suppressed, I do, indeed, you know ; and Parliament will have to do it, if it wants to preserve undisturbed the faith of the infallible reformers."

"For centuries," continued Mr. Telfer, "before the so-called Reformation, this Ancient British Church was merged in and entirely incorporated with the

Church of Rome. That any man, or body of men, can put forward the indecently base fiction that the modern Anglican is a continuation, by any possibility, of the Ancient British Church, is one of the wonders seen only among religious sects. The assertion is a marvel of religious lying, the product of partisan scheming, and the political use and desecration of sacred things. Why, they might as well say that the accession of William, in 1688, was a continuation of the ancient Roman rule in Britain."

"Ah, my grazious!" exclaimed Mr. Pocus, "how do you know all that, my dear? Did not King Henry, and Thomas Cromwell, and Cranmer, the Archbishop, aim especially at a restoration of the Ancient Church?"

"I will let a most respected historian answer that question. 'Thomas Cromwell,' says he, 'and the other reformers prostrated the Church at the foot of the throne, and made it a mere department of State.' And I think, as a part of the State, the Establishment is the best thing of its kind yet invented. It amalgamates religion and politics, but in such a way as to leave supremacy in the political constituent. It makes piety, patriotism and loyalty all practically one. It is the most admirable and useful element of that superb structure, the British Constitution, filling the chinks, cementing and binding together the parts, and fixing on top of the whole—consequently above itself—a supreme political controller and visible object of adoration, in a glory of the thronging 'royalty.' It is an invention which places the Church at the service of the State, and makes religion the zealous handmaid of politics. All this should be remembered by your

statesmen whenever there is a talk of disestablishment."

"Yes, yes, my dear, but isn't all that a little aside of the question?"

"Oh, well, the historian shall speak further, as to how the Ancient Church was restored: 'When the Primate of the (new) English Church (Cranmer) described the chief merit of Cromwell, it was by asserting that he loved the King no less than he loved God.' Was the Ancient Church a department of the ante-Augustine State? And did its Primate think it commendable, in a Minister, to love his King no less than he loved God? Was that the kind of religion in the original, the first of all Christian Churches, founded and taught by the apostles?"

"But, at any rate, the idolatry, the bowing to crosses and images, was done away with——"

"Yes. Let the same historian testify: 'The Parliament itself rose and bowed to the vacant throne, when his (the King's) name was mentioned.' Yet they could not bow to the cross. Why? Because that was papistic. That is, to venerate the wood on which Christ, the Lord God, died to redeem them, as much as they venerated the wood on which their libertine king sometimes sat, was, for them, flagrant religious corruption, and stank in their nostrils. Was this the doctrine and teaching of the ante-Augustine British Church? The commemoration of Calvary, that is, the sacrifice of the mass, was papistic; the altar, that is, the cross, on which that sacrifice was offered, was papistic; both must therefore be rejected. Was this the practice of the original Apostolic British Church? And did not these decrees solemnly

admit the intimate union of the Pope with Christ? After so much rejection, what remains of the Christian religion? Worship of the king's throne. Was Christianity thus reduced to its primitive form and essence?"

"But, my dear, my dear, how you do go on! I don't have no time to answer your questions. Who is your historian?"

"Green."

"Well, I don't know much about Mr. Green, but I do know that the Anglican is the original and true Catholic Church."

"Why, my dear sir, history proves that the English is a new, modern Church, made by Parliament, under direction of the so-called reformers, and fitted to 'live, move, and have its being' in the State. The supreme head which they put on it had, as such, only a political consecration. And now it is notorious that this same Church is 'governed by the Queen in Council,' legislated for by 'Parliamentary majorities,' and 'one of the principal objects for which the Church Association was originally formed had been attained. I refer to its work in obtaining clear legal decisions from the Queen's Courts.' I quote these sentences from the speech of an Anglican Archdeacon, who, during his whole talk, never spoke of a humble, or devout, or faithful, as the ideal, but always of a 'loyal' Churchman."

"Oh, you have the advantage of reading," said Mr. Pocus, "which is more than I have. I can't get no time; otherwise I could answer you better. But I know I'm right, because the Rev. Dr. Woodbe says so."

The dispute went on, neither party admitting either premises or conclusions of the other. The Hon. Mr. Glyder occasionally put in a word or two on the banker's side, to show that the faith within him was right, even if he could not make clear the reason for it. Of course the Baronet steadily applauded Mr. Pocus.

Ever since their first meeting Mr. Tellifer had seemed to be especially drawn to the Hon. Mr. Glyder. He listened to and addressed him with respect so noticeable that Sir Henry perceived in it veneration for members of English titled families, in spite of all that the American had formerly said. That gentleman appeared to have been struck by something which the Hon. Frank had uttered or intimated during the talk which was now languishing, and evidently desired to draw him out. Presently the Englishman said :

"One thing in Roman Catholicism would be intolerable to me, and contrary to the duty I owe myself, as I understand it, and that is submitting my judgment to the authority of a Pope."

"May I venture to amend your language a little, a very little," returned Mr. Tellifer, "so as to make it express the sentiment of Protestants generally? The objection is not to the surrender of judgment to authority, because that is a constant Protestant practice in matters of religious opinion; nor to the authority of *a* Pope, for that is another Protestant practice; but to authority of *the* Pope. Looking into the question, also you will perceive that, as a rule, every Protestant has his Pope. One of the blessed liberties of Protestantism is that which permits each

individual to choose his, or her, own Pope. You have only to raise a point with any one of them, and he will settle it beyond appeal, by citing the authority of his favourite preacher, the Rev. or the Rev. Dr. So-and-so, as our friend here, Mr. Pocus, has just done. One of my countrymen said that the religion of an American (Protestant) woman was 'faith in a personal minister,' so obvious and notorious is the fact to which I have called your attention."

Mary took no part in this conversation; she did not listen to it attentively, her thoughts were otherwise engaged. She only noticed the difference of character, as it seemed to her, between the assailers of Catholicism and its defenders, and felt this difference to be, of itself, an argument in favour of the Romanists.

Mr. Tellifer noticed her abstraction and depression, and would gladly have known, and if possible removed, the cause. But a certain sentiment of delicacy restrained him from questioning her on the subject, and from expressing sympathy, except by look and manner; for which nicety of conduct Lady Merton, not slow to perceive it, was most grateful. At the same time she remarked with a vague uneasiness, and kind of dull wonder, that Glyder had some powerful fascination for his friend. It appeared as if, for him, a magnetic spell lay in that scar across the Hon. Frank's face. The American's eyes expressed also especial admiration when the honourable gentleman raised the points of his second and third fingers to his lower lip, an action habitual with him, particularly when he was, or would seem to be, thinking. Probably the habit grew out of a desire to display a very finely-

formed and delicate, "a beautiful little hand," as Vivy called it. Whatever its origin, the custom was now inveterate. Whether it was the graceful motion by which the fingers were carried to this resting-place on the slightly protruding lip, or beauty of the hand, or a diamond ring on one of its fingers, which attracted his regard, Mr. Teller lost no one of the exhibitions. This plain attempt to gain the goodwill of her countryman, to rather demonstratively court him, in fact, affected her, in the state of her feelings at that time, like treason to friendship, and with a tightening about her heart she rose and left the room.

XXII.

NINA remained in her chamber, waiting and hoping that Hugh would come to her good and loving ; but he did not. A few minutes after she had withdrawn he went out, and was gone all day. When she knew that he had acted so unfeelingly, her grief would not be restrained, and miserably she passed the long hours.

Hugh did not return till late at night. His humour was visibly bad. He was irritated if she spoke to him, and irritated if she kept silence. Thus days passed without light, and nights without rest for poor Nina.

An active correspondence was going on between Hugh and Vivy. She was urging him to Rome ; hinting at great things which were going to take place ; doing all she could to excite, without gratifying, his curiosity. She intimated that a rival was in the field for Lady Emily, to defeat whom his immediate presence would be indispensable. She gave him no rest, and her letters put him constantly in mind of the fact that Nina had ceased to be a toy, and had become an embarrassment, a burden, a trammel. Suddenly he announced to this onerous young woman his intention of going to see his father and sister ; representing it as a matter of necessity, but that this visit was very much against his inclination, and that

it would cause him great pain to leave her, even for a short time.

She was almost glad to have him go, since the determination to do so brought back his sweetness; and she was comforted by the belief that his late ill-humour had been caused by the conflict between duty and desire. He could not tell how long he might be away, but not a moment longer than he could help. She packed his trunk, thinking of everything which might add to his ease, satisfy his fastidiousness, or please his fancy; and when the time for his departure came, and he, protesting more than was either needful or natural, bid her good-bye, she shed no tears till he was out of sight, but only gazed at him with such sorrowful yearning in her big, soft, luminous eyes, that the look haunted him for many a day.

Hugh's arrival was a surprise to Sir Henry and his wife. Vivy took possession of him, and in a very brief time had told him, under a solemn injunction of secrecy, that she was engaged to be married to a peer, that is, he soon would be a peer; but it was not to be known to anybody except themselves till they should have got rid of Lady Merton. Hugh interrupted her to say she was a fool for trying to disturb their step-mother, and had better mind her own business. Vivy gave her brother a long, distant look, her lids hanging enough to cast a shade of contempt on the languid gaze; then spoke of Lady Emily, to whom she had promised a visit from Hugh as soon as could be after his coming.

"Frank" called early to welcome his prospective brother-in-law, and received a very cordial greeting. Hugh's heart was hospitable to, and readily welcomed

strangers. With Lady Emily he was greatly pleased and flattered by her manifestations of favour and approval. Altogether his first day in Rome was a busy and a delightful one, opening up the most attractive prospects. Bologna seemed very far off, very dull, and poor Nina very insignificant. It was inexplicable how she had acquired and exercised that sway over him. It was her own fault, and if she did suffer a little in consequence, that was only natural. He was free of her now, and why should he not remain so? Lady Emily had thrown the angelic peasant girl wholly into the shade. Why should she ever emerge and cast her own constant, motionless shadow into the light of Hugh's life? Rather let the shade upon her deepen till she should be undiscoverable.

This Lady Emily was an orphan, with a yearly income of a good round fifty thousand pounds. Furthermore, though not beautiful, she was comely, and seemed to exhale a subtle allurements more captivating than handsome form and features. She was lively and intelligent, with a very passable wit. A common vivacity seemed to be the bond of sympathy between her and Hugh's sister.

With social attractions abroad, all Rome to be seen, and the amusements of young men, when together, claiming their due share of attention, it is no wonder that the Baronet's son saw but little of his father and step-mother, and knew nothing, since he had shut off Vivy's revelations, of the mine under their feet. If occasionally he saw indications of something abnormal, he regarded them as passing shadows on the heavens of married life. And so, forgetful of Nina, and the pretence of study, he was able to give himself up to

the fascinations of life in the Eternal City, heightened by an obviously prosperous courtship of a lovely woman, and of a more desirable fortune. Concerning his pleasures and occupations, his aims and ambitions, Lady Merton knew very little ; not that he was indisposed to speak with her in a friendly, even confidential way, but opportunities did not often present themselves ; he was so much of the time absent, and she was too deeply absorbed by her own anxieties and trouble.

An impalpable wall seemed to have grown up, as it were, in a night, between Sir Henry and herself, impalpable, but none the less impassable ; he no longer sought her ; she was as one widowed. When would the suspense cease ? When should she know the secret of this terrible change, this fearful mystery, the nature and purpose of these mysterious insinuations, and why her husband's love had been withdrawn, her very breath of life ?

The Baronet's character seemed to be entirely altered, or to present phases never yet seen. Certain mean, ugly, monstrous traits, which had been lying asleep somewhere in the depths of him, like loathsome creatures in slime, and crannies, and holes at the bottom of a stagnant lake, came to the surface. A jeer, more or less pronounced, was in his tone whenever he spoke to his wife, and his animosity to her increased daily. She did not know that he had been transformed by Vivy ; that this girl, by cajoleries prudently practised, had completely won her father's confidence, and possessed his ear, into which she ceased not to pour irritating innuendos and cunningly-devised accusations against her step-mother, without

proof, but with rare skill as to manner and matter, such as it seemed only the devil could inspire, maddening him, with the help of an augmented absorption of his favourite beverage, consequent upon the same irritation and distress. Mary's heart would have melted with pity for her husband could she have divined his sufferings and their cause.

But although, apparently, convinced beyond a doubt of his wife's perfidy, Sir Henry was not ready, or did not choose, to enlighten her by a frank, categorical charge, and thus bring the matter to an issue. Perhaps he had not yet all the evidence that he was told might be had, for he was dilatory; besides, in this case, he rather dreaded positive and merciless proofs. Or possibly he thought the course pursued by him was the most astute; a cunning way to confound a woman's artifice. But his insinuations grew less enigmatical.

"What do you consider your best investment?" he one day abruptly said with a sneer, as he came into the room where Mary was, evidently stimulated to a high degree of excitement.

"My best investment?"

"Yes, your best investment; old tapestries or old embroideries, old furniture or old paintings, money given to Roman Catholics generally or to one in particular——"

"I cannot imagine what you mean——"

"Yes you can. You know perfectly well."

"I assure you, Sir Henry, I do not, and I——"

"You lie! damn you!"

"Oh!" It was like the groan of a person mortally stabbed.

“It is an infernal lie, and you——”

The Baronet suddenly broke off, and glared at his wife.

Mary had dreaded more than anything else the using or the hearing of barbed words that would not harmlessly hit and fall off, but would stick and rankle; above all, words that would be like a thorny barrier between her husband and herself. And now these words had come like an explosion, this burning insult like a mine fired from hell, tearing open betwixt them a great gulf which could never be closed, only miserably bridged at best, yawning fearfully always. And she was speechless, half unconscious, unconscious as to all external things. Thought was paralysed in her by the shock of this language. She looked at her husband with wide-open eyes, like those of an animal desiring to speak; but they only expressed a great dumb terror and pain. Something in her gaze, which reminded him of a deer that had received its death-wound, partly disarmed Sir Henry's anger, or made him afraid; for he said nothing more, turned and precipitately went out of the room.

Lady Merton sank into a chair. She tried to think. What had happened? What was the meaning of this anguish? “You lie, damn you!” How the words blazed! with what a lurid light—how big they were, filling all the atmosphere! Sir Henry! her husband! her lover! the sole object of her adoration! And now that “You lie!” and that curse driving the insult home, lay like concrete things at the centre of her heart, so hard and heavy, relentlessly burning—and her brain! her brain!

Time passed, bringing no amelioration in the condition of parties at Merton House. Mary was in daily expectation of some further, perhaps final, outrage. She had put in writing an earnest, eloquent protest and prayer, for some explanation, some accusation if she merited it, some opportunity to vindicate herself, concluding it with an irrepressible outpouring of her tortured love and passionate yearning for reconciliation, of her craving for pardon, if she had unwittingly sinned; and sent it to her husband. It remained unnoticed. Sir Henry had not spoken to her since that last, grossest insult. She could not understand the lull—itself a constant source of dread; and while it lasted she was inactive, in a state of semi-torpor. Current bills were sent to her as usual. She quietly directed her maid to lay them on the Baronet's table.

In the meanwhile Mr. Tellifer had made considerable advances towards an intimacy with the Hon. Mr. Glyder. Evidently he enjoyed the talk of that gentleman, who could be truly entertaining. Some of his adventures were surprising, and he had seen many parts of the world.

"Ever been in America?" asked Mr. Tellifer.

"America? Certainly."

"Ah, then you beheld the home of the eagle, perhaps the eagle himself. Seen him soar?"

"No."

"Nor heard him scream?"

"No."

"Strange!"

"I wasn't looking for him. Went out with my friend, Lord Zounds, to hunt buffaloes."

"Good sport?"

"Reasonable. But he must have a look for grizzlies. He never recovered from it."

"What?"

"One of them."

"How?"

"A fight with him. The horn——"

"Of a grizzly? Never saw one."

"I was thinking of buffaloes. The paw struck him on one side and carried away his left shoulder with his heart. He died in my arms the next day. That reminds me of what a close call, as your people say, I had when I got this scar."

"Is that the mark of a grizzly?"

"No; of a tabby. Hunting tigers in India, I was aiming at one in a tree when he jumped for me. I dodged, but not far enough to escape him entirely. His unsheathed claw struck me just here, at the corner of my mouth, and cut a furrow to my ear."

"And he got away?"

"Well, somehow, I didn't feel like hunting tigers any more that day, and let him go."

In his intercourse with the Hon. Mr. Glyder, Mr. Tellifer came into frequent contact with the Englishman's valet, a fine-looking Italian, little above middle age, with a grave, sad face, and a something in his large, soft, dark eyes which looked like the phantom of a great dread or a great sorrow. This servant, like his master, seemed to have a mysterious fascination for the American, who cultivated the attendant's goodwill with as much assiduity as he did his lord's, though in a different manner, and rather secretly than with ostentation. No decent

pretext to "tip" him was neglected, and the man with ready intelligence soon grew to feel that between the stranger and him there was something confidential and secret, though what it was he did not know, and was contented to wait for the explanation.

Mr. Teller's occupations elsewhere did not keep him from paying frequent visits to Sir Henry and Lady Merton, according to his habit when in Rome, and he could not but be sensible that the former affection, tranquillity and cheerfulness were disturbed or absent. Signs indicating that a serpent had found his way into the nest were visible, in spite of Mary's proud determination to cover them up, to receive visitors and conduct herself in their presence as she did before the outbreak of this trouble, for Sir Henry's even more than for her own sake. This strange hallucination would pass, and then all, externally, would be as it was before, if the aberration could be kept concealed, and what an everlasting mortification it would be to have any of all this get abroad. And so she continued, as she thought, the even tenor of her way when observed by others. But, unfitted for, and unused to, dissimulation, she acted her part imperfectly, and her friends easily perceived that she was trying to hide some gnawing anxiety or harassing trouble.

Soon the American in his own mind connected the Hon. Mr. Glyder in some indistinct way with this state of things, though he could not have made clear the reason why, and he determined to press more warmly the intimacy with the Englishman, and particularly with his valet. He had learned, or rather divined, that this servant, Pio by name, was

secretly in the power of his master, a bondsman held by the strongest and most cruel bonds, the meshes and network of constant, lurking dread, a nervous apprehension of giving displeasure for fear of what might follow; and he undertook to unravel the mystery, and perhaps—who knows?—the net, if such it was, and the poor man had been ensnared by superior cunning.

When Mr. Tellifer returned from Naples the loves of the Hon. Frank Glyder and Miss Merton were running without a ripple, and all their undertakings were prospering. But Vivy had not passed an entire evening in the company of Lady Merton and the American without conceiving the notion that her step-mother had also an especial esteem for this stranger, and that the relations between them resembled a loyal, rather confidential friendship. This notion was enough to inflame her with a desire to destroy such friendship, and appropriate her “mamma’s friend.” She was all the more eager to do this because of the manly beauty, the masculine grace, the physical force of perfectly-trained and developed muscles, the symmetrical manhood of the grander type which this friend exhibited in motion and at rest. For there was a certain expression of strength, of power gracefully at ease, even in his repose. Mr. Tellifer was, in fact, well calculated to take any girl’s fancy, especially one like Vivy, who could only feel entire admiration for a man of his apparent physical, moral, and intellectual energy, one who appeared capable of being her master in all ways.

When a passion was kindled in Vivy, either in the usual manner or by spontaneous combustion, it

speedily enveloped her wholly, elevating the devoted girl to welding heat in an incredibly short space of time. With equal gradations she warmed towards Mr. Teller and cooled towards the Hon. Mr. Glyder. This gentleman could not fail to remark the change in her bearing to himself. She treated his expostulations with something very like contempt, and himself with a temperature below coolness, avoiding him whenever possible. Considering that they were engaged as partners in rather a ticklish little scheme for their common good, implying and requiring mutual confidence and fidelity as necessary for the safety of the allies, at least for the preservation of their good reputations, prudence would have dictated to the young lady a more diplomatic course of action. But Vivy rarely consulted prudence. Fortunately for her the Hon. Frank did cultivate and listen to that virtue. As for Mr. Teller, he had seen convincing indications that here was something which it might be profitable, or at least interesting, for him to look into, and into it he was looking. He had conceived a belief that, if properly handled, humoured, flattered, Vivy might wittingly or unwittingly afford some light.

XXIII.

SO long had been the respite from actual aggression that Mary began to question whether the worst might not be over, though Sir Henry continued to treat her in the most repellent manner whenever by chance they met, and never spoke to her unless it was absolutely needful. But this questioning was answered by her husband's words to Vivy, which Lady Merton accidentally overheard.

"My poor girl," as he caressed her, "I have done you great wrong; I know it now. You have been treated with injustice, and all your rights denied. But it has been brought about by misrepresentation and deceit. And be sure you shall be righted; you shall, indeed, my dear. I will make amends; upon my soul I will. There!" and he kissed her.

Not only did Vivy now possess all his confidence, but his intimacy with Messrs. Glyder and Pocus increased. These gentlemen were his frequent companions of an evening, to whom he offered hospitality flowing and sparkling, himself showing them how it should be received. Occasionally Mr. Teller joined them, and then Mary was sure to be tormented by the Hebrew Christian's gutturo-nasal voice raised in sibilant dispute. One evening Miss Letterly was with her; these gentlemen were in the next room;

the door was partly open, and she heard Mr. Pocus in tones of exhilaration, as if he were greatly elated by, and gladly recounting, a piece of good news saying :

“I zhust read about that priest in South America who was killed, poisoned to death, while he said mass, by poison put in the wine. What do you say to that?” he asked exultingly ; “where is your Real Presence now?”

And she heard Mr. Tellifer’s deep tones, richly vibrating, as he calmly replied :

“I know not what the theologians would say, but for myself I have no need to seek from them a logically satisfactory answer to your question. It was not poison, but wine, that was to be converted into His blood. The poison did not become incorporated and identical with the wine. The wine, therefore, could be changed to His blood, while no alteration would, or should, logically be made in the poison. It would be contrary to the premises. The poison still remained unchanged in the cup, and was swallowed with the blood after the manner of what is called a mechanical mixture, as of an insoluble powder in liquid. Christ’s body, when visibly flesh, during his sojourn on earth, did not resist or neutralize the power of mortal and vulnerating things ; witness the thorns, the scourge, the nails, and the spear, all that bundle of murderous instruments which did their work for and are implied whenever is named the Cross. And in the Eucharist He is an unresisting victim as he was then, subject to the betrayals of Judas priests and the cruelties of crucifying people.”

Mary listened gratefully to Mr. Tellifer ; why, she

could hardly have said, except that it gave her an inexpressible sense of relief to hear Mr. Pocus, whose question had troubled her, conclusively answered, as she thought.

But Miss Letterly was not pleased to have the apostatical Jew silenced even temporarily. She joined the gentlemen, therefore, intending to make a diversion in favour of the son of Abraham by raising a question which she thought would pose even the ready American.

"Mr. Tellifer," said she, "has a wonderful faculty for finding the origins of all sorts of Roman Catholic vagaries in the Bible. But there is one which I defy him to discover there, and that is the worship of the Virgin."

"Let us see," replied the gentleman challenged; "I think we must go to the Bible if we wish to perceive the beginnings of this worship——"

"Well, really, now, you know, that is taking the bull by the horns; it is indeed, you know," broke in Sir Henry.

"In Luke's Gospel are very clear indications of an increase in veneration for and cult of the mother of Christ. Seven years after the Passion, Matthew was satisfied with the brief mention that 'she was found to be with child by the Holy Ghost.' Twenty-three years later, that is thirty years after the Passion, Luke gave an account of the great honour paid to her by an archangel at the command of God Himself; by the mother of John the Baptist when, or because she was 'filled with the Holy Ghost,' and by the aged Simeon. In fact, the angel Gabriel and Elizabeth were, between them, the first to recite the Hail Mary,

excepting the request, added after she became a saint in heaven, that she would pray for us ; so added by those who believe, as well as profess to believe, in the communion of saints. In the Catholic sense of worshipping, when spoken in relation to the Virgin, Elizabeth, when 'filled with the Holy Ghost,' worshipped her, saying, 'And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?' Plainly the Mother of Jesus stands at the beginning of this Gospel a prominent, a very remarkable, a most highly favoured figure, and does not so stand in the two earlier Gospels."

"To confirm your theory, St. John's Gospel ought to make her more important even than Luke's."

"And so it does ; describing the fact and the manner of the first miracle—not mentioned by the other evangelists—wrought under her direction ; particularly pointing out the Virgin's part in it, her foreknowledge that it would be effected through her influence, notwithstanding Christ's objection. For, having named to him the occasion, that is, made the request, disregarding His plea, she 'saith unto the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.' Also in the record of how Christ on the cross made Mary the adopted mother of John, and him her adopted son. And these indications of the Gospels are confirmed by those in the catacombs, images of the Virgin and infant Jesus, coeval with the apostles, as some of us have seen."

"Oh, you talk like a regular papist !" exclaimed Miss Letterly, impatiently.

"Is, therefore, truth which I utter any less true ? and why should you hate and reject the truth simply because it is papistic ? Or why should you object

to honour paid the Virgin by apostles, when you profess to believe that the greatest honours were paid to her by God Himself? I know Protestants who, if they should meet the mother of Jesus Christ in the street, would not lift their hats for fear of doing something papistic."

"Which is wholly the fault of the papists, you know," put in the Baronet.

"Oh! that reminds me of a Virginia Judge's law in the early days. Of his circuit was an old lawyer, 'Squire Jones, who had ruled the court for years, dictating decisions and sentences. It happened that a young lawyer, Mr. Cambridge, came into the circuit and gave 'Squire Jones much trouble with his law and citations. One day he disturbed 'Squire Jones so much that the old man swore profanely in court. Mr. Cambridge promptly called the magistrate's attention to this disrespect.

" 'Go on, Mr. Cambridge,' said the Judge.

"Presently 'Squire Jones repeated his offence, in an aggravated form.

"Protest of Mr. Cambridge; same answer as before from Judge.

"Third outburst of 'Squire Jones in its most exaggerated and warmest expression.

"Red hot appeal from Mr. Cambridge.

"The Judge took time to consider, and announced his conclusion:

" 'Mr. Cambridge, the court has considered, and decided that if you don't stop making 'Squire Jones swear so, it will commit you for contempt.' "

"Well, now, what have you got to say about image-worship?" asked Mr. Pocus refreshed. "Can you

deny that it is idolatry? I guess it will puzzle you to find authority for that in the Bible."

"It may be found in a law recognized by the Bible, 'the law written in their hearts,' according to which any representation or relic of a venerated and beloved person is itself more or less beloved and venerated. Is it idolatry? If it is, the worshipped images are idols. If to venerate, or worship, as Catholics do, the image of Christ crucified is idolatry, then that image is an idol. Surely an idol may be spat upon by a zealous Christian. How many Protestants would dare spit upon an image of Christ such as is adored by Roman Catholics? If from veneration to Christ they should refuse to do this they would be guilty of the same feelings and the same offence as the Roman Catholics. There might be a difference in degree, but not in kind."

"The first person," remarked Miss Letterly, with dignity, "to show up the true character of image-worship was Luther, the Saurian."

"Why, Miss Letterly!"

"I assure you it is the fact," affirmed the lady. "The Rev. Dr. Filkins said so in his sermon on 'Idolatry in the Church,' and I heard him——"

"Excuse me," interposed Mr. Teller, "but I think you may have misunderstood. He probably said Leo the Isaurian."

"The idea! As if I hadn't ears. Luther the Saurian, he said, and I will stick to it. I do not see why you, who profess so much candour, cannot be candid enough to let that great reformer have his due."

"Do you really believe that the Roman Church has

been guided by the Spirit ; really, you know ? ” asked Sir Henry.

Mr. Tellifer’s face flushed. It looked as if there were a combination to catechise and worry him ; and the conviction seemed to add richness to his tones, as he answered :

“ If I believed half that you profess to, I should surely be obliged to believe that. Why, look here. Suppose that the Spirit has not guided His Church exactly as you would have guided it, or as your favourite parson would have guided it, or as your most respected doctor of divinity would have guided it, or as your most beloved reformer would have guided it, or as your theological tailor or shoemaker would have guided it ; does that prove that He has not guided it at all, or that He has guided it into error, or that Christ’s promises were of no effect, or that your tradition can make them so ? Or, because you are one ‘ that believeth not God ’ that therefore that one really ‘ hath made Him a liar ? ’ Are His thoughts your thoughts, or your ways His ways ? Not by a mighty difference, in my opinion.”

“ Haven’t there been bad Popes ? ” cried Miss Letterly, with an air of triumph, as if the battle were already won. This was her great argument against the Catholic Church, and she thought it conclusive.

“ Certainly,” replied Mr. Tellifer, “ but not a twelfth part of them ; while a twelfth part of the Apostolic Church at the first communion was devil.”

“ Yes, but he did go away and hang himself, and they didn’t ; and so left the eleven pure to eleven the whole lump,” returned Miss Letterly dogmatically.

Hitherto the Hon. Mr. Glyder, feeling some diffi-

dence as to the exactness and extent of his knowledge in regard to the subjects mentioned, had, from motives of prudence, remained silent, with the points of two delicate fingers resting against his lower lip. But now, not wishing to appear behindhand altogether, he ventured to ask :

"But, Mr. Tellifer, do you think the true Catholic, the Universal Church, is in any one body, or consists of some from all sects?"

"Who will not commune with one another?" responded the American. "It is as if Shylock and Antonio should constitute a Church, and Shylock should solemnly profess to believe in communion with the worthy but needy Venetian; and then, walking away, add, addressing Antonio, 'I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following; but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you.'"

And with this Mr. Tellifer, who was not pleased by the spirit in which he had been questioned, took his leave; in consequence of which the whole current of conversation was changed.

But the negative peace, granted temporarily to Lady Merton, was not to continue much longer. One day she entered the drawing-room when she supposed it was empty, and encountered Sir Henry with Vivy.

"You come very opportunely," said her husband coldly, and with the air of a magistrate addressing a criminal. "Perhaps you will have the goodness to tell us for what you have spent all the tens of thousands of pounds that have passed through your hands."

That "us" used by the Baronet struck his wife like a separate missile. Vivy was also her judge! She knew not what answer to make. She had only asked for remittances, had the bills cashed by, and the money deposited with, the Roman banker, as he had recommended, and drawn it thence as wanted. In these simple transactions was exercised all her knowledge of affairs. The day-book and ledger were for her a mystery. Under the circumstances there was something terrifying in that mystery. Her consciousness of perfect integrity, the most unselfish and faithful devotion to her husband's interests or wishes were no defence in a hostile court against any breach of the law of accounts, by which, evidently, she was to be judged; no plea against possible mistakes of which she might have been guilty. Dismayed by phantoms of the Unknown, she was visibly embarrassed, or appeared to be, and this was seized on at once as an indication of her guilt.

"There! do you see?" said Vivy to her father, but so loud that Mary heard. "What did I tell you?"

And so this girl, who had been sympathising with and encouraging "mamma," was evidently her sharpest accuser, as well as one of her judges.

"I see," returned the Baronet, "that my income has been diverted dishonestly for infamous purposes——"

"Sir Henry!" cried Lady Merton, springing to her feet, stretching her hand and extending her neck towards her husband, while her eyes were fixed on his with burning intensity. "Do you mean to say that *I* have diverted your income dishonestly for infamous purposes?" Her voice was low and very distinct, mellowed by and vibrating with passion.

The Baronet looked at his wife with an irresolute, almost an intimidated, eye, for a few seconds, as if he feared that he had said too much ; and then in a tone from which all magisterial assumption had departed he muttered :

“Oh, pshaw ! Come, Vivy,” and together they quitted the room.

Mary stood still, trembling in every fibre, while upon her came an overpowering, sickening apprehension that she had gone too far. It was the first time she had ever spoken to her husband other than affectionately, and the consciousness that she had so spoken, and the after pain of resentment, oppressed her with crushing weight. She felt that she herself had now destroyed the happy spell of their life, which, before this her angry outburst, might have been re-knitted.

And then she began to consider the provocation, the words that seemed to be branded in her heart. So, in spite of all that evident unreadiness to let his wife know the cause and meaning of his insinuations and strange conduct, an accusation had, in effect, escaped Sir Henry’s lips. And what an accusation ! “Income diverted dishonestly for infamous purposes.” This, then, was the charge. Slowly the meaning seemed to spread through her like some subtle poison. She was accused by her own husband, by him in whose eyes alone she had sought to be perfect ; by him for whom nothing was a sacrifice ; by him whom to screen from every disturbance had been her absorbing solicitude ; by him to whom she looked as her natural champion ; by him who had sworn to love, protect and defend her ; by him for whom she had gladly

annihilated herself to become a part of his individuality, a sharer of his pains, wishes, hopes, enjoyments, opinions, and beliefs; she was accused by him, this god of her supreme worship, to whom her heart and mind and all her acts were open as the day if he would but look at them; accused of the meanest the most monstrous, heartlessly treacherous, infamous breach of trust and abuse of confidence, and more—it could not be worse. She was unable to find adjectives strong enough to express all her contempt, abhorrence, and condemnation for the acts imputed to her by implication. Her imagination was not capable of conceiving the accusation to which all this was leading. But most appalling and excruciating of all was the plain fact that her husband no longer loved her; that his love was lost, dead, ended.

As for this charge, it was so indefinite that she knew not where or how to meet it, nor could she volunteer any defence; she must wait till called upon for her justification. Her pride was wounded mortally; it was crushed; it could never again lift its head. She saw that, sooner or later, it would come to a question of defending or of scorning to defend herself; and she tried to recollect what means she had by which her probity and honour might be made plain. Unfortunately she had kept not even memoranda. Considering herself as merely the Baronet's right hand, to transact business, sign names, write letters, pay bills for his use and profit, not for herself, except at his suggestion and request, it did not occur to her that she ought to keep a record of the sums and disposition of funds which passed through her hands. As Vivy had discovered, Lady

Merton had absolutely nothing to make manifest the uses to which she had put money, except a few receipts and receipted bills, casually preserved.

If Mary's character be borne in mind—the peculiar stamp of her excessive pride—it will easily be understood that no other charge could possibly have been invented against her so offensive, mortifying, and, to her mind, degrading. Yet, she could only wait in anxiety and dread, suffering intensely throughout her whole moral nature. And circumstances conspired to prolong her torture. Torment undergone by Sir Henry, through belief in Mary's revolting infidelity, combined with the effects of his favourite remedy for low spirits and mental anguish, brought upon him a serious indisposition, thus retarding the culmination of difficulties between him and his wife. He was confined to his room, and Lady Merton left undisturbed in her solitude.

XXIV.

HUGH was now busily engaged in the prosecution of a plan which nearly concerned him, since on its success, as he then believed, his fortune and his happiness for life depended. This was no other than a design, now fully determined on, to win and wive the Lady Emily ; but in the pursuit of this purpose he met with, or made, delays. There were difficulties to be turned, precautions to be taken. He felt like a general advancing into the enemy's country, anxious for the protection of his rear. That little affair with Nina, unreasonably enough, caused him a worrying apprehension. He had thought he should be wiser, a more perfect man of the world, more capable of letting bygones be bygones indifferently when the time might come.

For a few weeks after he had parted from that brave girl to visit Rome, he sent letters regularly, and then, gradually accustoming her by degrees to do without them, they ceased. She continued to write often and punctually ; to say things in her ingenuous way that were like burs to his conscience, pricking and sticking, not to be beaten off. And how plainly, sometimes, he could see her, nobody to talk with the livelong day but the motherly woman who furnished her rooms and fed her ; kneeling before

her Madonna or her crucifix, the superstitious little simpleton, weeping in her loneliness, yearning for her "husband," and praying; looking, he was sure, like the Madonna when she was going up to Bethlehem, and woman's great sorrow, preluding an infinite joy, not yet fully revealed, was overshadowing her; only, yes, he was certain of it, more beautiful; for verily there never could have been another girl so handsome as Nina.

Then he would seek Lady Emily to counter-charm this persistent enchantment. She had not, indeed, in her own person powers of incantation strong enough to dissolve the spell of the peasant girl, but she was mistress of extensive advantages, which had on Hugh the force of most potent philters when steadily contemplated. These were her social rank and her uncommon wealth. But of Nina's peculiar, indescribable, subtle, captivating loveliness she had none at all. However, disposed, as she was, to please a young man who particularly desired to find her pleasing, she appeared to him remarkably gentle, sweet, and winning.

Perhaps it was owing to those recollections of the peasant girl that young Merton deferred bringing his courtship of the heiress to a crisis. Whatever the cause, he apparently failed to perceive many occasions for learning his fate, and did not discover most discernible management on the lady's part to procure for him such golden opportunities. His dulness would have offended or disgusted any girl more sensitively vain, or less patient and amiable. He himself was in a constant state of irritation, caused by the consciousness of unmanly indecision, and of his

inability to determine and act according to what he believed were his wishes. But the thought of cutting himself off from Nina irrevocably, for ever, running through him like cold steel, would make him pause even in his most ardent career. Plainly he must accustom himself to this idea, and he would do so before making it a reality.

While Hugh was thus dilly-dallying in regard to his own most important affair, Mr. Teller was busy looking into things. In this he appeared to be aided by a secret understanding with Pio, and also by a most friendly intimacy with Vivy. This intimacy greatly disgusted the Hon. Frank Glyder and distressed Lady Merton, who saw in it the defection of her only support, a friend on whose unshakable fidelity she had relied as on something that could not change. And this defection was all the bitterer and harder to bear because she regarded it as the result of Vivy's intrigues to isolate and triumph over her step-mother.

Suddenly, and by accident, Mary heard that Mr. Teller had abruptly left Rome without saying good-bye to any one, and that nobody knew why or where he had gone. This news brought a grateful sense of relief. Since his flagrant alliance with her step-daughter the American's presence had become intolerable.

One day, not long after, while sitting oppressed as by an incubus, a sense of utter impotence being among the sharpest of her tortures, a servant, not over respectfully, brought her a request, or an order, from her husband, to be ready by such an hour for an indefinite stay at Albano. He had been frightened

by the Hon. Mr. Glyder's suggestion that his ailment was turning into Roman fever, and he could hardly delay his departure from the supposed centre of infection till his people had made some necessary preparations. He would not leave Mary behind. With all his excited feeling against her, he was unwilling that his wife should be beyond his reach ; perhaps because he did not wish her to escape punishment. They drove to Albano in different carriages, Lady Merton with her maid, and the Baronet with Vivy. Hugh preferred to remain in the city. A villa was offered them by one of their Roman friends, and in a few hours they were commodiously established. Sir Henry, breathing the delicious air, felt himself freed from all terrors, and could, with Vivy's help and a few hints from Mr. Pocus, go on with the arrangement of his cause against Lady Merton.

The Hon. Frank Glyder had become not only jealous and irritated, but also anxious in consequence of Vivy's change of conduct. Her deportment towards him, her manifest wish to avoid him, her peremptory refusal to be alone with him, were more than enough to craze an ardent and positively assured lover, indicating, as they did, tumultuous loathing rather than the turbulent love with which she had intoxicated him in the first days of their passion. He tried hard to believe that all this might be accounted for by her capricious nature and a passing fancy for Mr. Teller. But when he recollected the frank ingenuousness with which she had spoken to him of certain private matters, in their nature secrets between herself and others, during the

glow and fusion of their first loves, he was unable to master a chill of apprehension. He generously wished his sweetheart to feel a corresponding chill, and taking advantage of an accidental meeting with her alone, he menaced and made certain conditional promises to her in such a manner and of such purport that they accomplished his most benevolent desire. And that Mr. Tellifer! he would bear watching. Could it be possible? Oh, well, there were men as clever as he in the world.

All these subjects requiring thought, and some others likewise, so wore on the Hon. Frank's brain and nervous system that he grew choleric, and also imprudent. For when his man Pio objected, with an unusual show of spirit and independence, on moral grounds, to some transaction in which he was ordered to engage, the Hon. Mr. Glyder threatened his servant, using much unbenign language. Not only did he speak in an emphatic, ominous way of delivering up that servant's condemned carcass to officers of the law, but went so far as, in a minatory manner, to mention the probability that he himself should lift the Italian's condemned scalp, a phrase plainly brought from the buffalo-ranges of North America; suggesting a sensible loss to poor Pio, whose cranium was well covered with thick, black, glossy, wavy hair. The Hon. Frank finally roared defiantly that if the impudent son of an Italian female dog was not sufficiently illuminated to see his own interests and the way of his own safety, he, the master, would place a window in, or let daylight through, his condemned body. And he pulled a revolver from his hip pocket with a flourish, exhibit-

ing the tool with which he intended to do the proposed carpentry. At the same time, as if to render this mode of illumination necessary, he was piling on to Pio's eyes and eyelids dooms enough to have effectually and for ever blasted the sight of a battalion of serving men, to say nothing of a certain blinding blueness in the air, caused by the flashing friction and the sulphurous suggestion of his language.

Pio did not clearly understand all the eloquent words of his master, but was helped to their full signification by that honourable gentleman's gestures and intonations. His olive cheek flushed, his black eyes flashed ; and then his countenance became again serene as though nothing had stirred the inmost depths of him. But in that short interval of time a change had taken place, something had been aroused or come into being within him which would have startled the Hon. Mr. Glyder, and put him doubly on his guard, could it have been perceived.

XXV.

WITH Nina the days had been growing longer and longer, more and more sad and solitary. She knew that soon she must pay the first instalment of a debt contracted for her by Eve, and how could she—alone? She was unable to plan, to prepare, to think of anything except Hugh's prolonged absence, and, above all, his silence. The money which he had left was nearly all gone, and for many a week now she had hoped at night that the next morning would bring a letter from him, or—oh, it would kill her with joy—himself; and in the morning she beguiled sleep with the assurance which became consciously more and more fictitious, that evening would turn the pain of long expectancy to the ecstasy of fruition. But even months had gone by, and this pain was become a fixed, despairing anguish. She yearned for her mother and wept, thought of her father and wept, differently. Then her "husband's" idea would fill her mind, excluding every other, and her heart seemed to be consuming in a still arid heat, her eyes were dried, and her throat parched. And thus mamma Beppina found her one day, with so desolate and strange a look in those big, shadowy orbs, and about her parted lips, that she cried out:

"But what! Madamina mia! you have been crying and crying and crying. Oh, that is bad. What

will the padrone say when he comes and sees you have spoilt all your beauty just because you could not trust him?"

"He never will come any more, Beppina. He's dead!"

"Oh, the bimba! He wants to surprise you. You'll see him coming in at that door with his hands and his pockets and his arms full of pretty things. There! there!" and she took one of Nina's little hands in her left, and patted it with her right, by way of a caress. Then she went on: "And it may be, ah! yes, it may possibly be that some slut has fallen in love with him, and has been making up lies. But listen; let me tell you a story."

And Beppina seated herself facing Nina, and with her arms resting on her knees began:

"They say there was once a duke, who loved his wife very much, and she was very fond of him. And one day he had to go away over the mountains to get a big lot of money that he had inherited. But before setting out he and the duchess vowed that whatever might happen they would always be true, and have confidence in each other, and let nothing separate them or their loves.

"Now there was a bad, handsome woman, who had ever so long been envious of the duchess, and hated her, and wanted her husband, and her fine gowns, and the money and jewels he gave her, and to be a duchess herself.

"Well, a few days after the duke went away she followed him, with her heart full of malice and her head full of lies. When she came to the place where he was she made great ado to see him, as one who

needed help. And coming into his presence she fell on her knees and threw up her hands, so as to make her sleeves fall off her beautiful arms, and the covering from her white shoulders and round neck. Then she forced tears from her eyes, and in a voice sweetened by sadness—it was all put on, you know—asked him to help her. And when he had covered her shoulders and lifted her up—for he did not want to think of any woman's arms, or look at any woman's neck but his wife's—and asked her what was the matter, she said :

“‘O, noble duke, I want my lover, to whom I was soon to be married. He has abandoned me and gone to the duchess, your wife. She has enticed him from me, and they have been keeping high festival of love ever since you went away. And I cannot even speak to him. I beseech you restore to me my lover or help me to my revenge.’

“ Now, you know, this was all a big lie. Of course the hussy's plan was to get the duke in love with her by making him so angry with his duchess that he would never go back, and, to have revenge on his wife and the lover, put the lying jade in her place. But she did not gain anything. For though the husband said he would never see his unfaithful wife, he could not bear the sight of the woman who had told him evil concerning her. And so he stayed sorrowfully where he was and did not go back any more.

“ Then the duchess's maid, seeing in how great dolor was her mistress, because the duke delayed his coming and sent no message, and she knew not what had become of him, advised the lady to put on a pilgrim's dress, and she too would dress like a pilgrim,

and they would go till they found the lost husband. And so they did.

“On the way, when they happened to be near the city where the duke was living—but they did not know he was there—they stopped at a little tavern to rest during the heat of the day. It chanced that the landlord had but one room, and into that they were shown. About two hours later the duke, who was hunting, came by, and wanted a room in the same tavern where he could lie down. Well, the landlord knew the duke, that he was a great man and rich, but he did not know the duchess, and thought she and her maid were only poor pilgrims who could not pay much, and so he made no to-do about it, but just told them they must bundle out and leave the chamber for the duke.

“‘Well,’ said the maid, ‘let us have a few minutes to get ready.’

“When the duchess heard that her husband was there she came near fainting, but the maid told her to bear up, and to put on her hood and cover her face. Then the maid sent for the duke, and when he had come she said :

“‘It is great good fortune which has brought us to this tavern ; and the landlord’s injustice in turning us out is also great good fortune. We are the poor maids of your wife——’

“‘Never speak to me of her !’ cried the duke, in hot anger.

“‘And why not, pray ?’ asked the maid, as pert as could be.

“‘Because she is false and has dishonoured me, breaking all her vows.’

“‘Hity-tity!’ said the maid, ‘this is news indeed. Do you not remember me, Teta? And did you ever know me to tell a lie?’

“‘Truly, no,’ answered the duke, ‘but now——’

“‘Now I have a truth to tell, which is that some marvellous liar has been talking to you, or you have been dreaming lies.’ And as she went on telling him how piously the duchess had lived, and how she had mourned over his absence every day since he left her, the handsome, bad woman happened to come along and stop at the same tavern. But when she heard that the room could not be had because the duke and two women were in it, she was filled with spite. For now she hated the duke more than she did the duchess, and she feared he might be more gracious to the pilgrims than he had been to her. So she threw open the door without asking leave, and burst out like a venomous spitfire :

“‘All that I told you about your wife and my lover was a lie, and you, like a false-hearted craven, believed it. I had no lover, and was not going to be married ; I should laugh to see myself. Your duchess never was unfaithful ; she loved you altogether too much. And here you are playing her false with these——’

“At this moment the duchess uncovered her face, and the duke, opening his arms, ran to embrace her, going on his knees and asking a million pardons, and saying how much truer to her oath she had been than he. And after that they were not separated any more, but lived together always, happier than anybody.”

Though diverted by this tale, and Beppina’s vividly dramatic manner of telling it, Nina would not

be comforted and made hopeful. She was sure Hugh must be dead, or, at best, very, very ill—a long illness, with no one to take care of him, not as she would ; so ill that he could not write and tell her about it ; and he was suffering, poor dear, dear Ugolino ; he was suffering, as she was, kept so long away from her.

“Then why don’t you go to him?” cried Beppina. “Go at once—now. In a few days you will not be able to travel, you know, my dear. Go at once—to-morrow. There, that is settled. I will pack your trunk, and you shall have nothing to do but just get into the cars, and then, presto ! you are in his arms.”

“But I don’t know at all——” objected Nina.

“What has that to do? My cousin Gigi, who went in with the Italians, has lived there ever since. He shall meet you at the station—I will telegraph to him—and find a lodging for you, or, more likely, give you a nice room, he and his wife, where they live, over his restaurant, somewhere near the Piazza del Popolo, and that would be better, yes, best of all.”

And so it was finally arranged ; and so Nina went to Rome, and was lodged, for the time being, with Gigi and his wife. All the way, as the cab in which she was brought from the station passed along the streets, her eyes were searching on both side walks, as well as in every carriage, if perchance they might perceive Hugh, for she was not in her own mind absolutely sure that he was hopelessly ill or dead. May be there would have been a certain consolation in such an assurance.

As soon as might be after arriving she went to the place whither her letters had been sent, and was

informed that the gentleman had not been there for a long time. The people did not know where he was; most probably had left the city. Seeing her distress they were very kind and made many suggestions, entirely worthless, except as showing their goodwill.

She had now no clue; could find none; was lost in a maze. What should she do? Be still she could not; wander searching always she must; and so, heedless, ignorant of weariness, she roamed the Corso, the Piazza di Venezia, every place where there seemed to be many people, till twilight was fading and the street lamps lighted. Still she could not go to her room and rest; up the Via Condotti, into the Piazza di Spagna, as far as the College of the Propaganda Fide, and in the other direction, by the Albergo del Europa, the Scala di Spagna, when suddenly, nearing the Albergo di Londra, she saw a gentleman spring from a carriage and quickly enter the hotel, "Yes! oh, my heart! it was he, my Ugolino!" and Nina sprang forward with an impulse to follow him. But a second thought restrained her. She would bide till he should come out. Yes, it would be better so; to follow might annoy him. And she walked up and down before the entrance, a fever in her veins and nerves giving her an unnatural power of endurance. She had not long to wait. An inner door opened and Hugh reappeared with an elderly lady on his arm, followed by a younger. Awed and somewhat appalled by the mighty, overmarching sweep of English women, the elder of whom was tall, broad, florid, and carried her nose at the exact unvarying angle and elevation prescribed

for all women of her nation who would appear well-bred, as one of their own poets has intimated, Nina fell back and kept silence.

Hugh handed both ladies to the carriage, and got in himself. The evening was mild and the vehicle open. The horses were about to move. Pushed by desperation, Nina sprang forward with a cry which neither Lady Emily nor her chaperon ever forgot ; it was such an expression of irrepressible gladness, of satisfaction, of insatiable craving, of desperation, and of heart-breaking reproach, all uttered in the one vocable "Ugo !" a name which they did not recognize, and which sounded like a gush from the throat of a humanized nightingale, so pathetic was it. Hugh started, his face blanched to exceeding whiteness, he gazed at the young woman as at a ghost, while she stood with a whole soul all yearning in the eyes which encountered his, and which besides him saw nothing ; her hands clasped and writhing one in the other ; as if waiting a sign with one leap to alight and nestle in his arms.

"Drive on !" cried Hugh, impatiently, recovering his self-possession. The coachman had held in his horses. In an instant Nina was at the wheel, stretching her hands to her husband.

"Ugo ! Ugolino !" she murmured in softest Italian, "don't go, don't leave me again ! Come with me ! Ugolino, dearest, I am——"

"Drive on, I tell you !" shouted Hugh angrily, pushing Nina from the wheels, but not ungently.

As the carriage moved, Nina, standing motionless as though turned to stone, heard Lady Emily ask :

"Who was that ? " And her husband answered :

"I don't know her from Eve—a beggar, or some crazy creature, I suppose."

"Too handsome to beg, I should say," remarked the chaperon significantly, with habitual charity.

"And I should think too well dressed for a beggar," added Lady Emily.

In all the waiting, loneliness, desolation since Hugh had left her, Nina had fancied many sorrowful, many dreadful things which might have happened, but never anything half so terrible, so agonizing, and at the same time so paralyzing as what had just taken place. For some minutes she remained standing where she was when the carriage drove away, motionless as though spelled; then her legs seemed to melt under her, and she sank to the pavement. The hotel porter, who had been watching, ran to and lifted her, surprised at what he had seen, making mentally his own commiserating interpretation and comments, while penetrated with respect by the purity expressed in every line of her striking beauty.

Taking her into the house he gave her a seat and got a glass of wine, which by a gesture she declined, trying at the same time, with a smile, to express thanks, a smile that brought moisture to the kind porter's eyes. She asked him, hardly above a whisper, to call a cab, and when he had put her into it, declining any further assistance, directed the coachman to the Piazza del Popolo. When they were far enough from the hotel not to be overheard, she gave the driver Gigi's address. She feared the porter's benevolent solicitude might induce him to make inquiries if he knew where she lodged.

No tears were shed. They welled not. It was as

if they were all frozen in her heart, and oh, so heavy there! Everything in her was congealed; she was bound in ice, with only consciousness enough to feel the chill and the helplessness. Gigi's wife came to see why she had gone immediately to, and remained in, her room, and was frightened by the pallor and inertness of her guest. But Nina reassured her, gently, feebly saying that she was very tired and would go to bed. No, thanks, she wanted nothing to eat, she had no appetite.

All night Nina lay awake in the darkness, as yet too much benumbed, morally, to feel the whole of her wretchedness. At the very blackest hour her sense of desolation was intensified by hearing the rain which began to fall. No chance now of seeing Ugo the next day and of knowing why he had done so. Steadily, heavily it poured. By-and-by a perceptible lessening of darkness, and then a visible increase of light, as slowly dawn appeared, dragging the reluctant day. Rain, rain; a smooth leaden sky; shining wet roofs. Constantly it came down like a shattered, far-extending cascade, as if it would never stop, till near noon, when the rainfall suddenly ceased, and the sun peeped out among laughing clouds—they seemed really to be laughing, as though enjoying a huge joke that they had been playing on the people down below, by whom they wanted it understood that all this was only a good-natured pleasantry of good-fellowship. And the sun's first rays awakened hope in Nina's heart.

This hope began to whisper suggestions, but diffidently, as if half afraid, and then went on more confidently till it spoke with assurance, boldly. Hugh

must have had some cogent reason for acting and talking as he did. Yes, why had she forgotten it? He had always said it would do him great harm to have their marriage known. It was necessary for him to deny her, for her sake as well as for his; that was plain. Why was she so weak and foolish as to compel him? Now, in her desire to see him, the wish to beg his pardon for her impatience and indiscretion held the first place. Since he knew that she was in Rome he would seek her, and they should meet, when she could speak to him and tell where she was staying, and he would come.

With such cheering thoughts and imaginings the fair young creature beguiled time till past mid-afternoon, when she went out alone to give her hopeful previsions opportunity for fulfilment. She had walked slowly the length of the Corso, to the Piazza di Venezia, and back nearly to the Piazza del Popolo, no one seen escaping her scrutiny, when in a victoria she perceived the two ladies who were with Hugh the previous evening. She stopped, suddenly feeling with a kind of pang a quick dread lest she should be noticed by them. But they did not observe her, and going through the great piazza took the drive which leads up to the Pincio. Learning from an idler that this was a favourite resort and that music could be heard up there, Nina determined to follow the two ladies, suspecting that Hugh might be found in their neighbourhood.

When she arrived on the esplanade many carriages were in the piazzetta, and rather a large crowd collected around the band. Going about, so as to approach this group from behind and thus be screened from the

view of persons on the other side of the road, she mingled with the throng, where, unperceived, she could watch the two ladies, whose victoria was in the first row, and see clearly all who approached them. In less than five minutes after her watch began Hugh, with eagerness all too manifest, walked up to the carriage. Nina noted the flash, the flush, and the smile of pleasure on the younger lady's face as her Ugolino presented himself, and the quiet, intent greeting which passed between them, implying consciousness of a mystic isolation sphering only themselves, and for the first time she felt the anguish of jealousy.

Soon Hugh handed the young lady out, and they began a lover-like stroll in the gardens, tending, as if by harmonious instinct, to the more secluded walks and inviting coverts. Nina changed her position only so far that, without exposing herself to view, she might constantly see them. She was so pale, with feverish eyes so strained, and evidences of such intense suffering in her countenance that the neighbours regarded her with commiseration, more than one asking if she were ill, and offering restoratives. She thanked them for their kindness, but took no further note of them or anything about her; and when her gaze followed Hugh and his companion back to her victoria, Nina perceived with sudden dismay that the piazzetta was empty, and that herself was standing alone, fully exposed to the eyes of, and that she was actually seen and commented on by, the two ladies, who, not over delicately, directed to her Hugh's attention. He glanced at, but for the time took no further notice of, her.

As the carriage drove away he stood looking after

it, kissing his fingers to its occupants, when they looked back once or twice, as he fancied, for a sign of friendliness, but really to observe his conduct towards the beautiful strange woman, till it was out of sight. Then he turned and walked deliberately towards Nina, who had not moved, sternness expressed by his gait and in his countenance. The poor girl felt as though, like Daphne, she had taken root and lost the power of speech. Motionless and with suppressed breathing she awaited him.

Hugh's feelings and intentions were all the harder and more brutal because, rendered nervous and uneasy by Nina's inopportune appearance the evening before at the *Albergo di Londra*, uncertain and apprehensive as to its effect on Lady Emily, he had lost his head and feverishly determined to play his whole fortune, or, rather, the lady's, at once. He had employed the time and opportunity of the walk to make his avowal, and Lady Emily, taking advantage of his manifest demoralization, had ventured to indulge in a little coquetry, which she would not have done had he been master of his ordinary self-possession and confidence. Besides, she was really annoyed and disposed to jealousy by what had occurred the previous day. So she held him, figuratively, at arm's length, making much of the mysterious beauty in the *Piazza di Spagna*. But she had seemed to relent, when they were approaching the carriage and about to separate, and appeared inclined in the end to accept his assertions as true, till she had again seen Nina, apparently waiting for her lover; and this sight had destroyed the effect of all his eloquence. No wonder that he was angry and indignant at such persecution, such want of

consideration for him, such disobedience. No wonder his temper, a deaf and blind devil, took full possession of him. In such a mood he was capable of cursing his own mother, had she been alive and in his way.

"What the —— did you come here for?" were his first words.

Nina made no answer, only looked into his eyes with something in her own like what is sometimes seen in those of a faithful hound, signifying that it would say so much of most touching import by way of explanation and plea, but cannot make it understood.

"Why don't you speak? I asked why you came here?"

"Ugo!" The sound might have come from the throat of a dove, as the speaker pressed her hands more tightly to her breast.

"Oh, well, I suppose you are bound to have a scene anyhow. But it must be played out of sight. Come along, and let us be done with it;" and so saying Hugh led the way across the road and down the stairs which descend from the northern boundary of the piazzetta, halting in the most hidden spot he could find, behind the fountain at the foot of the steps, among the trees and shrubs which ornament the approach to the plateau on this side. Evening was now fast coming on, and the Pincio was wholly deserted. All this while he had not even offered her his hand.

"And now," said he, facing her, "I want you to tell me what in —— you came to Rome for, and why you are here without my orders or permission?"

"Ugolino, let us go to my room. I can't talk here. I can't tell you all. Let us go there, it is not far——"

"What business have you to get a room, or to have one which I did not provide? No, no, I will not go to it; I will not make myself responsible for it; I will have nothing to do with it; we must not be seen together; I cannot afford to confirm the stories, which your appearance and actions have started by exhibiting myself as your companion. You can say enough here, I warrant; and if you can't, I can."

"Ugolino! Why do you treat me so? What have I done?"

"What have you done? What haven't you done? Coming here without my consent or knowledge, spying on and lying in wait for me, speaking to me as though I were your long-lost brother, or worse, when I was with my mother and sister, and compromising me, although I have always told you that my people must know nothing of our relations to each other, and that it would ruin me if they did."

"I know, I know. I did very wrong. Oh, yes, I know it now. Forgive me, Ugolino, dearest, forgive me. It was so long that I received no word from you, and I thought you were very ill, perhaps dead. I feared it, and nobody would tell me, because they did not know I was your wife."

"Oh, bother! naturally!" said Hugh.

"And then suddenly to see you well, and handsomer than ever—I had to let you know I was here. I couldn't help it—and to have you once more. Oh, Ugolino!"

"And so you made it impossible for me ever to trust you again, ever to go back to you——"

Hugh stopped and waited to note the effect of his

words. Nina looked at him as if she had not comprehended, and said nothing.

"Do you understand?" His voice was even harder than before.

"I don't think I do," she replied.

"I say I can never go back to you. Do you understand that?"

"You can't mean it, Ugo?"

"I say exactly what I mean, and nothing else. You have disobeyed me, have compromised me, have destroyed all my confidence in you. I never can and never will trust you again, and we must separate. Is that clear?"

"Ugolino!"

There was a strained look of anguish in her widely opened eyes, as she slowly sank to her knees before him, partly extending her arms, with the palms of her hands towards him, and then folding them tight to her breast. She looked like a young martyr awaiting execution, save that the look of heavenly resignation was lacking.

"You might have known by my not writing that I did not want anything more of you."

"Ugolino!"

"Don't 'Ugolino' me."

"Ah! my husband!"

"Oh, that's a d—— lot worse. I'm not your husband. Don't you ever dare to call me so."

"Not my husband?"

"Not by a d—— long distance."

"But we were married——"

"Yes, by a priest. That is no marriage in this country, as I have learned, fortunately."

"Not married?" She was still on her knees, and into the mortal paleness of her face came a faint tinge of blue, on the heights of her cheeks and about the mouth.

"Not married, and never were. Do you understand that?"

"Not married!" She seemed not to have heard his last words.

"And now I must go, and you had better be on your way, too."

"Not married? What will become of me?" This was not a question addressed to Hugh, but he answered as if it were :

"I would advise you to go back to your room, which you said was near, and then back to Beppino. I will write to her about you. Are you going?"

Nina did not answer. Her eyes were closed and her head bowed on her breast. Hugh thought she was praying to her favourite Madonna, and felt no alarm on her account.

"Oh, well, if you will not go first, I must. Good-bye." He held out his hand.

"Ugolino!" She opened her eyes, and looked in his face, but seemed not to see the offered hand. "Won't you kiss me, Ugolino?"

He did not think it best to comply with this tender, heart-broken request, but suddenly turned and swiftly disappeared, going down towards the Piazza del Popolo, congratulating himself for having accomplished so easily what he had a long time dreaded.

When Nina rose feebly to her feet, looked wearily about, and, choosing a path, walked unsteadily down to the great piazza, taking no note of anything, and

murmuring "Not married!" as she went, twilight had almost disappeared, and the street lamps were lighted.

Arrived at the foot of the descent, on the edge of the piazza, she paused irresolute, looked around in a dull, dazed way, in the direction of Gigi's place, and then towards the city gate. Presently, turning to the right, she walked with uncertain steps through the Porta del Popolo, and along the Flaminian Way towards the Ponte Molle, perhaps because an instinct like that of the animals told her that way led to her earliest home, murmuring "Not married!" like a worn-out child trying not to forget its errand.

XXVI.

SINCE the day when the Hon. Mr. Glyder had freely and forcibly expressed opinions, and contingent intentions, relative to his bondman, in a speech addressed solely to that person, Pio had become the owner of a long knife with a sharp edge and a delicate point, and had held several discussions with Himself. Himself passionately urged that with the aforesaid long and sharp knife always in Pio's possession, their master should be smitten under the fifth rib ; and he added, with an ominous closing of their common jaws, that the weapon should be well driven home, and turned and wriggled in the wound. Pio objected that this could not be done without killing the man, which would be assassination, if not murder ; that is, a crime, a forbidden crime, and not only forbidden, but a mortal sin. Himself said this would be neither murder nor assassination, nor crime, but a righteous work of justice, a judicious execution. Pio replied that it was not their business to execute justice in that way. Such execution must be left to the magistrates and to heaven. To which Himself responded that generally heaven and the magistrates did not agree, and that if the execution of this criminal were left to them, it would probably be neglected, and he escape scot-free while they were

differing. Pio returned to the effect that this was a matter in regard to which they alone were responsible, and should settle it as they saw fit. Himself answered that this was a degenerate, cowardly mistake, or the excuse of a degenerate coward; that no honourable Italian could let courts, or magistrates, or heaven itself do justice for him when blood was necessary for satisfaction, and that to do so was despicable.

These arguments on the one side and on the other were repeated day after day with little variation, Himself gradually cooling, and Pio taking advantage of that fact, and growing more positive, till finally he prevailed so far that Himself grudgingly consented to postpone all action and the final determination of the question indefinitely, to see if the magistrates and heaven would do their duty.

About the time that Hugh was saying his last words to Nina in the covert of the falling garden on the Pincian slope, the Hon. Mr. Glyder informed Pio that he should dine at the restaurant just beyond the Ponte Molle, and that during the evening he might have need of his man. Pio, therefore, was requested to be at the bridge by seven o'clock and wait there, since it was not necessary for him to be seen, for further orders.

A little before the hour named Pio arrived at the bridge. It was a superb evening. All clouds had disappeared, and the moon, nearly at its full, standing above the Alban Hills, illumined the Campagna. The waters of the Tiber, swollen and supplied with a fresh admixture of yellow soil by the morning's heavy rain, rolled swiftly by, looking, as the moon's rays

fell upon them, like a flood of old gold. Pio, having understood that, while waiting, he should not be a conspicuous figure in the landscape, reconciled duty with comfort, and disposed himself at the end of the bridge nearest the city, in a reclining posture, with his back against the parapet, so that he could restfully sleep away his watch.

He had hardly completed this arrangement of himself, and expressed his satisfaction by a series of long-drawn breaths, when his attention was attracted by the vacillating gait of a woman who was slowly approaching by the Flaminian Way. In her movements was an air of indecision like what might be in the walk of a person dreaming. At first Pio thought it the exceedingly rare case of a poor creature slightly overcome by wine, and he arose, more closely to observe her as she drew nearer. Apparently she had seen and wished to avoid him, for, turning to the left, she abandoned the road, directing her languid steps across the open land, obliquely towards the river; and, when she had come to the bank, she turned farther to the left and wandered down the stream.

Pio had been on the alert, suspecting that the woman was intending to commit suicide by drowning, and ready, if possible, to prevent the execution of her purpose by coming to the rescue. He now abandoned that suspicion; but was not relieved of his fears, for he knew how great was the danger, walking as she did unsteadily on the very brink, that by a misstep she might be precipitated into the water. He was cautiously following and debating whether he should not overtake and warn her, when his foot

fell on some dead reeds. The noise caused the woman to start with fear, to turn her head quickly, to see that she was pursued, and somehow, while doing this, her foot went wrong, the earth, loosened by the morning's deluge, gave way, and with a faint cry, in which was no quality of terror, she slipped into the boiling current.

In an instant Pio's coat was off, and he swimming with all his might towards the robe which yet bulged at the surface of the river. He was within a couple of yards, almost leaping from the water by the force of his strokes, when it settled out of sight. Down he went after it, down, down. The stream was so muddy that he could see nothing. He struck out wildly in all directions, vainly. Then finding how useless it was to seek blindly in this way, he rose to the surface, there to watch for the first rising of the body. He let himself go with the current to keep as near as possible to the drowning woman, straining his eyes to catch any sign of her reappearance. He was looking down the stream, taking in a wide sweep of the current, when his right hand came into contact with some soft fluvial gossamer, and there, close by him, dimly seen in the turbid water was, a woman's head with the face down, and its long silky covering flowing and mingling with the waves.

Clenching his hand firmly in this hair he attempted to gain the shore. Several times was he rolled under by the furious river before, in the steep bank, he could find a landing-place. Finally, almost exhausted, he obtained foothold, drew after him his burden, of which the face was still concealed, and, lifting her in his arms, staggered up the sharp ascent to level ground,

a couple of yards above the flood, and there laid her down. She was apparently dead. Pio knew little of the way in which a drowned person is brought to life, but thought the best thing he could do would be to place the woman's face, which was completely hidden by the long, wet hair, in a convenient depression of the earth so that her mouth and nose should be lower than her body, and thus allow the water to run from her lungs. Then he found his coat, which was not far off, and put it on, for, wet as he was, the night chill struck through him. It was his intention to go in search of a policeman. As he looked again at the body, however, something about the back of the head and neck startled him. He quickly turned it over and swept the hair aside so as to expose the features.

"My God! Nina! my child! my poor little one! my poor baby!——"

Suddenly her shape arrested his attention. He passed his hand with feverish agitation over her, trembling with apprehension.

"Malediction!" It was the roar of a wild beast receiving a wound, as he sprang to his feet with a motion as though he were going to spurn the body. He stopped short in middle action, stood rigid a few seconds, and then collapsing and falling on his knees with a great and bitter cry, he twined his arms about his child, buried his face in her neck and bosom, and sobbed aloud, murmuring in broken words:

"Oh, my poor lost one! *mia povera traviata*!—it was no accident—not caused by me—it was not thy fault—I know it—an angel cannot err—a hell-hound in a heavenly mask—seduced thee—God's curse upon him—may he burn for ever!—and there—

fore thou wouldst do it—*mia traviata!*—*mia traviata!*”

Sobs and murmurs ceased as instantaneously as they had burst forth. With intense agitation he placed his hand and his ear on her heart.

“It beats! by God! it does beat! She’s alive! alive! Idiot! murdering fool! to dawdle here and let her die!”

He caught her up and started on a run to the road, then turned to the right, and continued his headlong course towards the city.

No one was in sight; no help within hearing. So burdened, his strength would fail before he could attain succour. Ah! he hears a carriage behind. Whomsoever, whithersoever bound, of whatever class, it shall serve him! He stops, facing about in the middle of the track, and shouts. The driver reins up; fortunately it is a cab. Pio places his load and himself in it, and names the hospital of S. Giacomo. The coachman put his horse to a trot.

“Drive! drive faster!” said Pio, rising and speaking close to the man’s ear; “quick! quicker!—faster! I say, or I will stick you, by——” He held his long knife. “Curse the beast! beat him! kill him! make him fly! there! there!”

Thanks to this vigorous conduct and discourse, the poor horse was whipped to the top of his speed, and they reached the hospital in an incredibly short time.

As the attendants were undoing Nina’s dress a rather large photographic miniature dropped out of her bosom. Pio sprang upon it; the ferocity of a tiger was in his action. He saw that it represented a young man, and with a movement of uncontrollable

fury threw it on the floor and raised his foot to stamp, when he seemed all at once to bethink himself, picked up the photograph, and put it carefully into his pocket.

Presently they sent him from the room where Nina was, consoling him with the assurance that they hoped to save her from the immediate effects of the water. He apprehended nothing implied in these words, and his heart was greatly lightened. He did not go away from the building, and before ten o'clock was informed that his daughter had recovered consciousness, but that positively he could not see her. He must wait. And he did wait; waited till morning. Still the same answer; she was doing well as could be expected, but he could not see her. The morning passed without knowledge of hunger on his part; he was famishing to hear the voice of his child, and to hold her sensible in his arms.

The day wore on. They seemed to have forgotten Pio, who, alike oblivious of nature's requirements and the Hon. Mr. Glyder's probable anger, waited, waited. At length anxiety overcame patience in their silent conflict, and the father ventured to obtrude himself so far as was necessary in order to inquire for his daughter.

"The young lady is very ill; pray for her." This was the answer.

And there, in a corner of the common room in which they permitted him to stay, did Pio pray, unmindful of those who, coming and going, looked curiously, sometimes with commiseration and sympathy, at the strong man shaken—prayed in an agony for his child.

It was towards midnight when a message was brought to him again ; this time voluntarily :

"The young lady is mother of a male child ; pray for both."

Notwithstanding the strained occupation of his thoughts and feelings, Pio remarked that they spoke always of "the young lady," and never of "your daughter." Did they not believe his story ? Another night of watching and waiting and anguish for the father. The next morning came the last message :

"The young lady is out of immediate danger, and the child is doing well."

And then Pio, his heart buoyant with thankfulness, went away, with the purpose of making his explanations and excuses to the Hon. Mr. Glyder, and of getting some much-needed food, sleep, and rest. As he walked along the Corso he was surprised by meeting Mr. Teller, whose return to Rome was as unexpected as had been his departure. That gentleman, struck by Pio's appearance, kindly asked the cause of his paleness and general look of dilapidation, but his questions only elicited evasive answers. The father could not yet talk of his daughter.

"I know what it is," said the American. "You have been trying to settle accounts with your master, and find yourself in his debt."

"If we had tried to settle I should owe him nothing," replied Pio with flashing eyes. "But I assure you, sir, it is nothing of the kind. Our account is yet unsettled."

"Oh, about that carbineer," remarked Mr. Teller, abruptly, "whom you killed in the woods above Pistoja. He says it was not your fault."

He says !”

“ Yes. He says it was an accident.”

“ He !”

“ Yes, he. He explains how it was: his foot caught—he stumbled——”

“ When did *he* say so, and to whom ?’

“ The last time yesterday ; and to me.”

“ Then he wasn’t killed !”

“ No more than you were ; only badly stunned. I have looked into it. In fact, I went on there to look into it. They caught the men they were after when he laid hold of you, which made it clear that you were not wanted. Your only offence was resistance to authority, and this was well nigh forgotten. As they did not know your name or anything about you it might have been disregarded. But I wanted you to feel absolutely free, and on my representations, properly backed, the whole matter is officially wiped out.”

“ And all this time I had no need to be afraid of Mr. Glyder and his threats to deliver me up to the authorities ?”

“ Not any.”

“ Then I *am* in his debt. But I shall wait your instructions. Good-day, sir.”

Pio went his way, and Mr. Tellifer continued his walk to the Albergo di Roma, where some American gentlemen, lately come from London, had just arrived with whom he had an appointment.

XXVII.

THE air of Albano had a most beneficial effect on Sir Henry. In the first place it blew away the terrors of Roman fever, and in the second inspired confidence in a speedy restoration to health. As a consequence he felt able and inclined to take up the case of Merton *versus* Merton, and push it with vigour ; which he resolved to do, spite of some objections and attempts to deter him on the part of Vivy, in whom, as a result of the Hon. Mr. Glyder's latest communications, fear had taken the place of zeal, and whose lukewarmness, not to say positive coldness, was a surprise to the Baronet. However, when she saw that it was impossible to turn her father from the purpose which had been engendered in him solely by her machinations, Miss Merton, to preserve an air of consistency, the indulgent disposition that Sir Henry had lately manifested towards her, and her ascendancy over him, made a show of zeal in prosecuting the investigation.

The Baronet had continued zealously his experiments with B. and S., and believed he had established the fact that S. had a tendency to disturb his head, producing a species of vertigo. Consequently, in his practice, the S. was diminished more and more and the B. increased. He was one of those persons who could provoke any degree of madness in himself by

alcohol without producing apparent effects on his muscles. His legs and tongue were clothed in proof against the assaults or the ambushes of spirits in that form. The steadiness of his gait and the fluency of his speech, which latter, by the way, was like that of a streamlet hesitating before and then tumbling over obstacles, were unchanged by potations. But of this fact his wife was not yet aware.

Having, by repeated doses of his favourite provocative, got his courage, and especially his indignation, up to what seemed to him a satisfactory heat, taking in his hand some papers, and accompanied by his daughter, he went to the room where Mary was sitting, and with a most irritating assumption of dignity, severity, and superiority, demanded :

“Are you prepared now, Lady Merton, to give an account of your stewardship and tell me how this great sum of money has been spent?”

“How can I, Sir Henry?”

“There! do you see?” exclaimed Vivy, unable, now that active hostilities were resumed, to restrain her animosity or keep out of the fray.

“See? See what?” cried Mary, stung by the triumphant taunt and sneer in Vivy’s tone and manner. “That I cannot give the account you demand? I avow it. Did you really expect me to tell you how, and for what, has been expended each centime of your money that I have handled in all this time? I tell you once for all I cannot. I have kept no reckoning. As your wife it did not occur to me that it was necessary. Receipts will show something. As for the rest——”

“Perhaps you will at least inform us what you have

done with the two thousand pounds received not long ago through this bill?" and he exhibited a draft.

Mary looked at it with curiosity, which mastered, for the time, every other feeling. It was an ordinary bill of exchange, ostensibly drawn on Sir Henry's London bankers by her, as his attorney, payable to the order of a Florentine bank, and by it cashed. Lady Merton saw all this at a glance.

"I know nothing of that two thousand pounds," said she.

"But you drew them only——"

"I did not. You may yourself see that it was cashed in Florence, and you know I have not set foot in that town for more than a year, and that I have not been out of your sight long enough to go there."

Sir Henry was staggered, and silenced temporarily. Vivy became very pale, and stared at the paper as though it had, for her, a horrible fascination. After turning the bill over and looking at it on each side, and from every point of view, the Baronet asked, with something very like a crestfallen air :

"How do you explain this?"

"I don't explain it," replied Mary. "You had better get some of your informers to give you the explanation. But it makes clear one thing to me, and that is, how the London account came to be overdrawn, when they gave me notice to that effect."

"Don't you believe her, papa," whispered Miss Merton. "She is lying. She sent that draft to Florence for the money, without its being known."

"Do you mean to say this is a forged bill?" asked Sir Henry.

"I do not mean to say anything about it. I never

saw it till you produced it. To say what it is rests with you."

"Very well. I am not surprised, you know ; possibly you will be better able to tell why you took and paid for this room at No. 13, *Vicola della Gabbia* ?" And he unfolded the receipt.

"Quite able. That I did. I took it for a poor woman who was dying from lack of proper shelter—"

"You mean you hired it to shelter your meetings with that libertine priest, whom you support at my expense."

"I do not understand you, Sir Henry, and, with your leave, I will retire."

"By ——" The Baronet suddenly suppressed his exploding wrath, and added, in a voice trembling with the effort to speak calmly : "Wait a moment, madam ; wait a moment. You will be likely to know more of these two cheques."

Mary looked at them attentively. They appeared to have been drawn by her to the order of Don Foresti, and by him endorsed when he obtained the money. Vivy had vainly tried to persuade her father not to speak of the cheques.

"Well, madam, what have you to say ?" asked Sir Henry.

"I have to say that I never made, or saw, those cheques. Not long ago I discovered the loss of some blanks, which had been torn from the back of my cheque—I mean your cheque-book."

"Take care, madam ; take care."

"Ask Don Foresti."

"Oh, he would be likely to tell the truth !" sneered the Baronet.

"He couldn't," returned Vivy, well knowing what she meant.

"This is an edifying spectacle, Sir Henry," said Mary, coldly, haughtily, supreme disdain mantling her like a garment. "Pity that it is private. A crime or crimes have been committed, plain felonies, forging by an unknown person, or theft by your wife. And you, as a gallant gentleman, can think of no one so likely to be the criminal as a woman; and as a loving husband, no woman so likely to have committed the felony as your wife. You are her sneaking, cowardly accuser, vulgarly forcing her into a vulgar and odious squabble; you who wooed and vowed to love and reverence her, who swore to cherish and protect her! you, who should be the first to meet and repel from her even the shadow of a suspicion, and, failing in this, should stand by and help in every possible way her defence—you have been secretly scheming and confederating, stealthily searching, and privately preparing to ensnare your wife, to prove her a traitor——"

"And I have done it!" roared Sir Henry, now wild with the effects of brandy and anger. "I have done it! Your Don Foresti, luckily, has come back. He has been seen and questioned. All he could say was that he never received these cheques, a small and easy lie for one whose business it is to deceive——"

"Sir Henry!"

"I say he is a liar, like all his smooth-faced, oily crew; and, what is more, he is your accomplice, madam; yes, madam, your accomplice, and—and your lover——"

"My *what*?"

“Your lover, by——”

The Baronet was interrupted by an unaffected burst of scornful laughter.

“You dare not deny it, madam.”

“It is false! False as the father of falsehoods! False as yourself.”

“You lie! damn you! You lie! And this you have learned from these damned Roman Catholic Italians, and——”

Sir Henry did not finish the sentence, for Mary had turned her back on him and walked with haughty deliberation from the room. Before he fully comprehended the fact that she was gone, the outer door was heard to shut.

“There she goes!” cried Vivy, who had run to the window.

The gown which Mary wore was a simple white one, she had a white shawl over her shoulders, and on her head only her glorious hair.

The last twilight was gleaming faintly over Rome, in the distance, and the moon shone brightly above the Alban hills. Lady Merton walked swiftly, with no destination in her mind, obedient only to the fever in her brain, and in her heart. By-and-bye, when excessive bodily exercise had brought a kind of calmness, it was impressed upon her consciousness, as seeming facts appear in dreams, that she had wandered into the woods that lie between Ariccia and Genzano. The atmosphere of the grove, the murmur of the leaves, the mystery of the shadows and the moonlight falling through openings in the dark screen above, the fresh, odorous coolness of the air, soothed her; the tumult of emotions subsided somewhat, and she began

to be aware of a leaden weight at her heart, pulling her down, down. She sank to her knees.

"O my God, help me! help me! Give me a forgiving heart. O my God, be merciful!" she cried in a paroxysm of anguish; and she crouched till her face almost touched the ground. After a few minutes of silence in this position she arose wearily, as if her strength were going from her, and looked listlessly about. No decent place of shelter met her eye. She had a dim remembrance of having seen some excavations, in the face of a bluff on the road side, and of thinking they might have been hermits' cells. Where were they? She was driving at the time down hill—yes, it must have been on the way to Cecchina. She would go there. One of those caves would afford her an asylum, for the night, and till—till she could think. Now she only wanted to hide, with the instinct of an animal wounded to death. She would get into some dark place, taking with her, if possible, all knowledge and memory of herself from among men.

She came out into the highway, and walked back towards Albano. On the right of the magnificent viaduct at Ariccia, above Prince Chigi's superb dark woods, towered Monte Cavo, clearly defined against the moon-lit sky. On the left the ravine gradually widened till it was spread like a painted fan, half opened, on the campagna; and beyond it the Mediterranean glittered in the silvery light. But Mary took no heed of these things. Her trouble was all-absorbing. She was hoping, yet fearing, to meet Sir Henry, or someone, looking for her; kept on the shadowed side of the road, and turned to the left at

the very first lane that would lead her through the village, and out into the Cecchina road.

When this point was reached she quickened her steps, as though dreading pursuit ; passed some villas, and came into the more open country, open except for vineyards, olive, fig, and shade trees. And now she began to feel a great weariness, perceiving no sign of the caves, for which she was in search. Seeing a convenient stone at the foot of a high bank by the road-side, she sat upon it, her hands resting in her lap, her head sunk upon her bosom, disposed to abandon herself utterly to the woe which had come upon her. Crickets were chirping a cheerful though monotonous chorus, in the distance a dog was lazily barking at the man in the moon ; from time to time a breath of air would move the trees, with a sound, as if they were sighing in their sleep.

A few minutes after Lady Merton was seated she threw up her head like a startled deer. Yes, it was—plainly the footfall of someone running on the road below her—yes, it was in that direction. The view was cut off by a sharp curve. Hastily leaving her seat she sprang up the steep, grassy bank, ten or twelve feet high, and screened herself behind a hollow olive tree that was growing on its summit.

XXVIII.

THE good news that Mr. Tellifer had communicated made Pio boldly abstain from going back to his master, and at liberty to put in execution the one remaining purpose of his life. Hitherto his animating hope had been some time, somewhere, in the indefinite future, to find the dearest thing that might yet belong to him, his adored Nina. And now that she was found, without waiting for the slow lapse of days which they told him must go by before he could see his child, he would set out on the quest for her destroyer.

This time there was no discussion with himself, and no difference of opinion between them as to what should be done when that destroyer was once discovered. The traditions of his people and the instructions of his ancestors had settled that. The ravager must perish by his, Pio's, own hand. That might no more be questioned than the existence of a first cause. It was according to the laws of eternal justice, and the eternal fitness of things. Only a renegade and craven would appeal to the magistrates for help and vindication. Pio was neither a craven nor a renegade. He would not disgrace himself by asking, or permitting, constables, jailors, judges, executioners, with the mercenary help of lawyers, to do tentatively, doubtfully, hesitatingly, formally, slowly, what should

be done swiftly, as by an unerring blow of awful Fate, with no dilly-dallying for form's sake, nor any terror-abating delay.

The obviousness of difficulties that he would meet in seeking the person on whom should fall this blow with direful suddenness, in no degree deterred or discouraged him. He possessed the precious photograph that he had so nearly wasted in his blind rage; and he was convinced that its original must be in Rome, as indicated by Nina's presence. And he began his search patiently, and continued it doggedly, by preference in the most frequented ways and places.

Hugh had left Nina feeling that he was lightened of a heavy burden; or, rather, that an indefinite trouble which had loomed foggily before him, and which might, as it drew near, take any form and dimensions, had vanished from his future. He went to his club, played a game of cards, dined, and, later, enquired at the hotel for Lady Emily. He was told that the ladies were out. This answer, which he had good reason to believe fictitious, produced the effect of a bucket of cold water thrown in his face. It was an intentional rebuff. Clearly, Lady Emily was jealous and intended to make her jealousy disagreeable and inconvenient. He was not aware that through the trees she had seen him conducting Nina down the steps, a proceeding which, though never so ungallant in its manner, convinced the English woman that there truly was something between her now avowed lover and the Italian beauty, and that he had shamelessly and impudently lied.

Hugh spent a large part of the night smoking

cigarettes and studying how these suspicions of the sweetheart he coveted might best be dissipated. He had no better fortune the next day : "The ladies are out, sir." In the evening he wrote on his card an urgent request to be received, and directed it to be sent to Lady Emily. In a short time he was invited to walk up. But before many minutes he regretted his action. The young woman treated him with careless ease, in which there was, however, a suggestion of constraint. She was unusually, or rather unnaturally, gay, and contrived so to lead, or, more properly, to push the conversation, as to keep it away from themselves and prevent any pauses of which her visitor might take advantage.

At length, however, he desperately broke down her guard, morally rushing in at her, and insisting on introducing the personal topic which was nearest his heart. She coolly affected not to understand him, and immediately talked of some indifferent subject. He complained of his ill-fortune in not finding her when he had called earlier—she expressed no regret. So skilfully and effectually did she baffle him, that before long, mortified by so cruel a check, feeling that his wooing, the success of which he had considered as past all doubt, had been brought to naught, humiliated by defeat in his attempt to set matters right, and tremulous with resentment at what he esteemed a perfidious want of friendliness, candour, and fairness, he was constrained to take his leave.

As he went he comforted himself by cursing Lady Emily. When he had done this to his heart's content he began to excuse her, throwing all the blame on Nina, the cause of his misfortunes, and discharging at

her volley after volley of maledictions, as vehement as though they were fresh. Wasn't it plain that she had been the mover of all his ill-luck? If she had stayed there in Bologna, and quietly continued to endure the growing torture of absence and uncertainty—Oh! it was too irritating to think of! And yet Hugh's thoughts now lingered about, seemed to be held by a magnetic attraction to, the young woman who had caused him so much injury.

He saw her kneeling, with that pallor of death on her face, and that ineffable anguish in her eyes, as he had last seen her, there among the trees as they came down from the Pincio. True, she was a spiritless thing, contrasted with the woman he had just visited; but Lady Emily had put him in the mood for spiritless things. And the longer he compared them the lovelier did the spiritless creature appear. He began to regret his ignorance of her address. He would like to go and be kinder to her—make it easier for her—give her some money,—for now he remembered that she might not have any——

By this time Hugh had reached home. Going directly to his room, with vigorous muscular show of energy and determination he took paper and pen and began to write, venting his exasperation in an insolent letter to Lady Emily. As the torrent of words poured forth and spread over the sheet, he felt a buoyant sense of relief. When he had finished writing, having by the process largely given out his resentment, the letter appeared to him such as no gentleman could send to a lady. He tore it up, with a curse, this time laid upon himself under the designation of a "fool," and went to bed.

The next day he rose late, dressed himself a little at a time, listlessly, with long intervals of reverie, standing at the window, and biting his nails, according to his habit when in fits of abstraction. His coffee was consumed in the same inattentive way, slowly, by instalments. Clearly, Rome was growing dull. He should be obliged to visit Albano for change of air, and to see Vivy. She could make things lively when she was disposed, and she, if anybody, could influence Lady Emily, and get him out of his scrape. Yes, he must see Vivy, and set her to work without delay. She and Lady Emily were still good friends. But, before going, he would write a letter of adieu, a heart-breaking letter to the woman whose unfounded suspicions and whose most unjust, though unspoken, sentence had condemned him to irremediable and interminable wretchedness; ah, yes, he would wring her very soul with his touching reproaches.

It was after noon when, at length, he sat down to compose this important epistle, designed to produce so much effect, which must be prepared most carefully, with the weighing of every ingredient, the measuring of every word, and the testing of every phrase. Hours passed before this work was completed to his satisfaction; but then it was very much to his satisfaction. He counted on a subjugation of the rebellious maiden by it as if that were already accomplished. This letter was sealed and—locked in a drawer. Let her think she had indeed driven him away. Give her time to miss, want, long, cry for him, wondering whether he hated her and what he was doing, and if he would never come back. And then—— But he had to meet certain engagements.

While, for this purpose, he was walking along the Corso when it was most crowded, at the time of general promenade and saunter, he was struck by a sudden movement and expression of glad recognition. The man was unknown to him. As their gaze met, perceiving that Hugh's attention was drawn to himself, he cast down his eyes and passed on. Returning at twilight Hugh met this person again, and noticed a kind of unpleasant fascination in the stranger's intent, scrutinising look which he surprised.

Going to his room the young man found this telegram from Vivy :

"Come immediately. Awful row. Devil loose. Scandal. Come *at once*. V."

After carefully reading this summons twice, he walked to the window, to guess what it might mean, and bite his nails. There, on the opposite side of the way, partly concealed behind the corner of a building, but visible enough in the gas-light, was the man whom he had twice remarked, evidently watching the exit from the palace.

Hugh's curiosity was for a moment aroused, but quieted by the assumption that this was a beggar of the better class, awaiting an opportunity to present a petition. It was, perhaps, too late already to catch a train for Albano ; but since he had determined to go, why not at least try to do so this evening, according to Vivy's earnest request, especially as he was most impatient to learn the full signification of her dispatch. So he ordered a cab to be called, and in a few minutes was on his way to the station, but arrived, as he had feared, too late to connect with the Albano branch.

This was not, however, a fact of grave consequence,

since, by waiting half an hour, he could take a Naples train as far as Cecchina, and from there, if a carriage was not to be had, easily walk up to Albano. The delay seemed long as he lounged about the station, went into the restaurant, drank a glass of stale beer, and industriously smoked cigarettes, all the while wondering at Vivy's telegram, eager to know what could have happened in the family, and disposed to find fault in no mild words, and at every turn, with the slowness of the railroad people. Finally, he was permitted to get into a wagon. Was he mistaken, or did he really see that man of the Corso disappearing into a third-class carriage?

He argued this point some minutes with himself, and was opening the door to go, see, and settle the question, when the last "Partenza" rang out, and the car moved. It was a slow, half-merchandise train, and did not arrive at Cecchina till nearly an hour after it left Rome. There Hugh sprang out and nervously looked up and down to see if "that man" had really followed him, and then, not perceiving the person for whom his eyes were searching, hurried through the gate to seek some vehicle which might take him up to Albano. Nothing of the kind was there except a cart to which were hitched a mule that had evidently had much experience, and a donkey, whose philosophy, patience, and resignation plainly had not lacked occasion for exercise.

With his club the driver of these animals was just then encouraging and persuading them to set out for their home on the hill side. Seeing that he should be compelled to walk, Hugh was glad even of the peasant's company and that of his long-suffering com-

panions and servants ; for the road looked lonely in the moonlight, and was silent save for a melancholy-making concert of insects. To enjoy a comforting sense of protection and the cheering sound of the driver's voice and club, as from time to time he reproached his beasts, together with the noise of their feet and the slow grinding of the wheels, Hugh walked behind the cart.

When they had proceeded in this way for some distance the young man, impelled by a nervous and most unpleasant feeling in his back, caused by recollections of "that man," coupled with solitude of the country, and the influence of night, looked back apprehensively, hastily to scan the road over which they had passed. Could he have been deceived this time? Surely he had seen a human figure throw itself into the shadow of a high wall the instant it appeared round a bend in the highway. After this, turning frequently to reconnoitre, he became convinced that someone, surely "that man," was stealthily following him ; and the very stealthiness indicated some malevolent purpose ; most likely robbery, thought Hugh.

Fortunately he had about him no large sum of money, nor anything of much value that he could lose ; and unfortunately he was entirely unarmed. The switch in his hand could not, even by courtesy, be called a weapon. But the young man prided himself on his speed in running, and if worst came to worst, he would show the brigand a clean pair of heels. At any rate there was no need of anxiety so long as he was protected by the cartman, with whom he had tried to talk and at least learn his destination. In vain : he

was able neither to make himself understood nor to understand what was said by the peasant. Nevertheless, he found courage in fancying that his escort, unconscious of the service he was rendering, would go as far as the town whither he himself was bound.

Unluckily, a few minutes later the beasts turned of their own accord from the main road, taking a narrower one to the left, and Hugh felt himself suddenly deserted. His first movement was to face about and scrutinise the road and the shadows in his rear, visible as far as a turn some two hundred yards back. Nothing calculated to arouse or confirm suspicion could be seen. Then he lengthened his steps and quickened his pace. When he had advanced perhaps a hundred yards he glanced back, and there, plainly to be seen in the middle of the road, was a man walking swiftly, and clearly less than two hundred yards from him.

Hugh's heart gave a great leap, and he began to run, darting off like a deer with extraordinary ease and swiftness, and soon had sensibly increased the distance of his pursuer, for such he now plainly showed himself to be by also breaking into a run. However, this first advantage could not be counted for much. It was to be a question not of speed, but of bottom; whose muscles and whose wind could longest endure the strain of running up hill. When the first mile was covered Hugh still held the advance that he had primarily gained, but he was in the bluest of funks, as he himself would have described his moral condition, his breathing gave signs of distress, and his heels seemed to have turned into lead. At the end of the second mile he was violently panting, and his

gait was visibly unsteady, while his competitor had plainly shortened, by at least one third, the interval between them, and was running as steadily as when the race began.

The dogged persistence of his follower struck a new terror to young Merton's heart. He felt instinctively that it indicated a motive more intense and more terrible than the desire to rob. But this terror could not reinforce his speed, which was too nearly spent. No reserve could be called into action, and he staggered on, unable to advance firmly in a straight line, describing narrow zig-zags, with his head almost constantly turned, so that, over his shoulder, he might watch the dreadful pursuer. Before he had gone a quarter of a mile further, heeding his enemy more than his way, he stumbled and fell at full length, ploughing the thick dust of the road by the momentum of his body. When he had recovered and was again on his feet, the bloody-minded follower—for what else could he be?—was not more than fifty yards distant, and the glitter of a weapon in his right hand could be seen. A chill of despair curdled Hugh's blood, and he felt all the terrors of a violent death. Vainly he tried to shout for help; he could bring no sound but a loud, husky whisper from his parched throat. His mouth was open, his inspirations like quick gasps, and his breathing might have been heard far away in the stillness of night, yet he still staggered on at a running pace. The contest, however, was practically over; the man behind had come within ten yards of him, when Hugh fell for the second time, uttering a groan of unspeakable terror, as though he already felt that dreadful knife in his vitals.

At this moment a figure in white raiment descended and stood between the two men.

"Madonna Santissima!" exclaimed the pursuer, falling instantly, though at full speed, upon his knees, dropping his knife, which glanced along the road till it lay still at the apparition's feet, and putting up his hands in an attitude of devout veneration.

The angelic form did not speak, but stood motionless, staring with majestic horror at Hugh's enemy.

"Holy Madonna, do not protect him," said the kneeling man, beseechingly; "he is unworthy, he is a devil; he has destroyed your child, my Ninetta, my darling—betrayed her, ruined her, defiled her—oh pure and spotless Madonna—driven her to despair and death—death by her own act. Do not protect him, I entreat; leave him to my just vengeance."

"Hush!" cried Mary, for, as you know, it was she who, from her concealment, had recognised Hugh. Unmindful of the danger there was in crossing the path of a man maddened and blinded by some murderous passion when he was in hot pursuit, she had suddenly glided down the steep bank from her hiding-place, looking truly, with the white robe upon her and the white shawl over her head, like the representations and popular notions of the Madonna when she appears. Fear, which otherwise might have overpowered her, had vanished before the posture and words of the man. "This is my son; what has he done to you?"

And then Pio—for you know that the avenger is Pio—told how lovely, how pure, how pious, and how dear had been his darling Nina; how while he was in jail for no wrong done, and so many other disasters

came upon him and his family, Nina had disappeared ; how he had lived hoping some time to see her again, or at least to hear what had become of her ; and how he had found her in the river, driven to suicide by the villainy of that man.

"She carried this in her bosom," he went on, showing the photograph, "and it is the likeness of that fiend, the black-hearted devil who stands there, and whom you, oh Mother of Mercy and Purity, protect from my most just and holy revenge."

"Nina killed herself!" gasped Hugh, who had recovered his feet and stood leaning against a rock which protruded from the bank, panting with open mouth. "My God ! she was my wife. How did she do it? When was it? Oh, Nina ! Nina ! We were married ; in the back of that miniature is the certificate."

He made this avowal in Italian, and all the more unhesitatingly because he believed the poor girl was dead, and it could have no consequences other than to pacify her father and avenger. The news had, indeed, caused him a severe shock and a pang of grief ; of remorse also. At the same time, in the deepest and darkest recess of his being, he was conscious of a not unpleasant, though sneaking, sense of relief, occasioned by the assurance that all inconvenient and disagreeable complications, caused by Nina's trusting love for him, would be now for ever at an end. But for this feeling, feeble and skulking as it was, he had the grace mentally to call himself a selfish scoundrel, little better than a murderer, and all the time the moment and mournfulness of his loss swelled on him like a rising flood.

Pio, bewildered, stupidly picked at the miniature till Mary took it from him, and, with Hugh's help, it was opened. There, sure enough, written in choice Italian, was the record of Nina's marriage by the priest.

This turn in the condition of affairs and the relation of parties seemed well nigh to have turned Pio's head, rendering stronger the belief that he was in the visible presence of the Madonna, by whose interposition and prayers everything was miraculously coming out well. He had remained all this time on his knees, and now, raising his hands with the intention of giving thanks, he said :

"Oh, holy and most gracious Madonna——"

"Chut! Nonsense!" cried Mary. "I am no Madonna. I am a miserable woman," she added, in a harrowing voice, as her trouble, of which even the memory had departed when she hid, surged over her. "Stand up." She spoke impatiently.

Pio looked at her as if he did not comprehend what he had heard.

"It seems to me—are you not the blessed lady, who, with the gentleman, came to me in jail?—and now here. It is wonderful—you and the holy Madonna so much alike, as like as two little drops of water. I cannot understand. But I must thank you on my knees, most excellent lady, for all you have done, then and now. I should have killed her husband, and what would my poor Nina have said, and what would have become of her and her baby?"

"Her and her baby!" exclaimed Hugh.

"Yes, her baby," returned Pio, rising from his knees, picking up his knife, carefully wiping the dust off it,

and putting it in its sheath, "born after I took her from the water——"

"Then she is not dead?"

"No, thank God, who helped me to save her."

"And she has a baby?"

"Yes, a boy——"

"Where are they?"

"In the hospital, whither I carried her. But why then did she want to kill herself?" and he gave a searching glance at Hugh, which made the young man shiver internally.

Then Pio reflected that it might have been an accident of which he was the cause, as he had at first suspected. But why was she wandering there alone and so ill? Manifestly here was a mystery that must be solved. And with a reflux of rage, like a dog that has been compelled to abandon the object of his wrath, he turned and growled threateningly at Hugh.

"If I find that there has been any foul play—that you, my respected son-in-law, are in any way the cause of my poor girl's misfortunes, why—we will recommence our race. I give you fair warning this time."

A radical revolution had been effected in young Merton during the last few seconds. The knowledge that he was a father, the father of that lovely, lovely, Nina's child; that she still lived; that he could end his remorse by expiating the wrongs he had done her, whom his villainous conduct—he did not spare himself now—had driven to suicide, tortured beyond endurance; his brutal cruelty to her when they last met, his long neglect of her, all passed vividly before him, and, with a changed voice and moist eyes, he said:

"I will go to her at once——"

"It is too late."

"How too late?" cried Hugh, with poignant apprehension.

"They would not let you see her."

"When can I? Ah, my poor, poor Nina! What you have suffered! I must talk with her!"

"You will have to wait till she is well enough."

"At any rate I shall go back to the city to-night," and Hugh looked at his watch. "A train will pass Cecchina in about two hours from now; I will take that. But pardon me, Lady Merton, how comes it that you are here alone at this late hour, with these marks of dolor which make you look more than ever and so truly like an ideal Madonna, that it is no wonder he took you for one, coming down from heaven as you did? Where were you?" The young man suspected that his step-mother's presence there was in some way a consequence of the "awful row" mentioned in Vivy's telegram.

"Ah, Hugh, I cannot answer your question—not now. Only it is impossible for me to re-enter Sir Henry's abode. Please leave me here, and take this man, who appears to be your father-in-law, with you. I think you should not tell Sir Henry just at present that you are married. Doubtless the news would distress him very much; he is excited, and could not well bear it now. Later, after you shall have prepared him for the shock, you may make the announcement."

Hugh tried hard to make her change this determination, and return, at least for the night, to the villa, but in vain. Her resolution was immovable.

She thanked him, begging that he would go his way and leave her.

"But it would not be right or decent for me to desert you," he exclaimed. "And excuse me, I will not, unprotected and unsheltered. And you have just saved my life. Let me take you back to Albano, and to a hotel——"

"To arouse curiosity, excite marvel, and create a scandal, more hurtful to your father, even, than to me. No, that *must* be avoided."

"Then go with me to Rome, to the apartment on the Corso."

"That is Sir Henry's."

"Ah! To a hotel there, where you are not known."

"Alone or with you would be alike imprudent."

"What will you do?"

"Truly, I do not know."

"I have it, listen." And he addressed Pio. "Is there a convent of sisters at Albano?"

"Certainly."

"Do you happen to know any of them?"

"The Superior is my relation."

"Do you think she would take this lady into the convent for the night?"

"To be sure. Why not?"

"Look here, my lady," and Hugh turned to his step-mother. "Plainly something very serious has happened. I do not know what it is, and you will not tell me; but I suspect, and if my suspicions are right, it is all an accursed conspiracy against you. Bear up under it a little while; it shall be unravelled, and you shall be righted. I feel as if, for once in my life, I wanted to do something magnanimous, or at

least just, and show that I am not altogether a selfish, worthless, ungrateful puppy. Unless I am mistaken, Vivy is at the bottom of this, and if she is, by — she shall confess. And now I beg you to be guided by me, at least in this crisis. We will go to the convent, and Pio—your name is Pio, if you are my Nina's father—will obtain for you the needed hospitality. There you will have shelter and protection, in more senses than one, till this storm is over."

"Ah, Hugh, it is not a storm, it is a convulsion of nature that has uprooted and torn asunder. Things can never be as they were. But I will go to the convent for the night, and be grateful to you and this man for taking me thither. The idea of its peaceful retirement pleases me, I wonder I did not think of such a retreat. But I could not think——"

They turned their faces towards Albano, and Hugh offered his arm to Mary, while Pio came behind, until the young man, not entirely assured of his newly-discovered father-in-law's friendliness, and having a vision of that fearful knife before his eyes, politely requested him to walk on the other side of Lady Merton.

The inmates of the convent were asleep, or at least in their respective sleeping rooms, when Pio's summons startled them. He repeated it twice, with more and more urgency in its character, before they heard an enquiry from within. Then Pio made himself known, the Superior was called, and after much parley and explanation, which, however, only made the reason for this proceeding on the part of the English lady more obscure, she was admitted, and the two men were left by themselves.

XXIX.

ABOUT an hour after Mary had left the villa, the Hon. Mr. Glyder arrived at it unexpectedly, and was received by Sir Henry with so nervous and distracted an attempt to make cordiality apparent, that he slopped it round generally. He was no longer in an aggressive mood, had no inclination to bully and insult anybody, not even his wife. A reaction was at work ; he began to have misgivings in regard to his conduct, feared he had overdone matters, was apprehensive of consequences, all the more calculated to render him uneasy because he could not with probability even conjecture what they might be. He had gone to his wife's chamber. Its very atmosphere was impregnated with her loveliness, as by a subtle perfume ; her loveliest loveliness at the time when he had most tenderly and passionately loved her ; and it subdued him. He became lamentably weak, kneeled by her bed, and for a moment buried his face in its lace coverings. The exquisite taste, the orderly and artistic disorder, every sweet article in this holy place bore her impress. Pretty things for the toilet, the thousand trifles, each, through its alluring arrangement, adding some charm to the room, and every bauble or jewel, precious in itself or otherwise, that he had ever given her, seemed to be there—abandoned.

He could not endure it ; his sense of bereavement and loneliness was awful ; he retreated, carefully and softly closing the door after him, as though she were asleep within, and he feared she might be waked.

In such circumstances the company of an honourable friend like Mr. Glyder was a tonic, and helped him to keep up his spirits. Vivy did not show herself till dinner was announced. Since she had cast her fancy on Mr. Telfer, her aversion to the Hon. Frank had become extreme, ungovernable, nourished by a consciousness, ever present, that he had a hold on her from which she could not free herself. Her whole being was in rebellion to this gentleman's power, and she would not have hesitated to gain her freedom by excessive measures. Certainly she would not give a tacit acknowledgment and confirmation of a continuing confederacy between them, by informing him that their plan had succeeded as to its principal part, and that Lady Merton had been driven from the house. She was ready to save her father any embarrassment.

"Mamma is not feeling well, and will not dine," she said, coming into the drawing-room. Sir Henry looked at her, greatly surprised, his face brightening with the thought that his wife had returned. He was about to speak, when Vivy's sign silenced him, and they went to dinner. The Baronet talked louder and more than usual ; drank deeper and oftener ; yet could not conceal fits of absent-mindedness ; while his daughter directed all her conversation to him so that the Hon. Mr. Glyder did not, on the whole, find the company very entertaining. When they left the table, Vivy retired to her room immediately, and did

not again make her appearance, and the gentlemen went to smoke. B. and S. was brought, of which the Hon. Frank partook sparingly, his host freely.

An hour and a half later Mr. Tellifer's card, asking leave to present two friends, was brought in. Sir Henry had not seen the American since his last return to Rome, and gladly greeted him, courteously receiving his companions, Messrs. Mumps and Parley, from the States. Mr. Tellifer said his friends were visiting Rome for the first time, and he had brought them out to pass the night at Albano, and the next day to visit the other towns on the Alban hills, the ruins of Tusculum, and so forth, and he had thought it might be mutually agreeable for them and the Baronet to meet.

"They are well posted as to real, active, lively life in America," said he, "and can talk with personal knowledge of game, from a gopher to a grizzly, and from a Cheyenne to a cowboy. My friend Mumps, here, has the autograph of a grizzly which he carries about with him as a souvenir."

Indeed, the strangers both looked as if they might have had experience of adventures, but it had left the most noticeable marks on Mr. Mumps. He was of medium height, rather stout, with broad shoulders, and a short, thick neck. The left side of his face was hidden by a stubbed beard. The end of his nose was wanting. Apparently it had been cut off, together with his right cheek, of which there seemed to have remained only flesh enough to support the immense scar by which it was now covered, and on which no beard would grow. This condition of his visage at first sight gave the

impression of a man that, in some of life's conflicts had lost his balance. He wore dark blue glasses, possibly to conceal the loss of his right eye, if that also were gone.

Mr. Parley was a sandy-looking person, with what might be called an alluvial countenance, or one on which all water that passed over it seemed to have left a very thin deposit of yellowish-brown soil. His small grey eyes twinkled, but not with merriment, in deep sockets ; his nose was long and sharp, his thin lips made thinner by habitual compression. His forehead was covered low by reddish hair, which behind fell nearly to his shoulders. He wore a long, sandy moustache that he almost constantly pulled, stroked, or softly fingered, as though it had not yet become entirely familiar, and he wanted to perfect its acquaintance and make it feel at home. Lanky, mutton-chop whiskers, coloured like his moustache, adorned his spare cheeks. His was a face with no look of austerity or acerbity ; its expression, on the contrary, was rather pleasant. But it never smiled. It was not composed of risible features. It never did, and clearly it never would laugh, whatever might happen. He was dressed in English checked cloth of the most exaggerated pattern. Mr. Mumps, on the contrary, was simply clad in stuff of a dark colour.

Sir Henry thought that Mr. Tellifer's friends, judging by appearances, were at least peculiar, probably typical Americans. The Hon. Mr. Glyder superciliously acknowledged their rather uncouth salutations.

"Can I see Lady Merton?" asked Mr. Tellifer of the Baronet ; "I have a message for her."

"A message?" returned Sir Henry, somewhat embarrassed.

"Yes; from one of her poor women, whose life she saved, and who is very grateful. She also gave me this letter."

The Baronet took the letter, which was not closed, and unfolding it abstractedly, exclaimed:

"No. 13, *Vicolo della Gabbia*! A sick woman there?"

"Yes, who owes everything to Lady Merton."

"How did Lady Merton hear of her?"

"Through Don Foresti. He took her to the house."

"And Lady Merton paid her rent?"

"Yes." Mr. Tellifer was evidently surprised at the husband's ignorance. "She hired a decent dry room for the sick woman, took her out of a miserable damp hole underground, and visited her——"

"Oh, my G——" Sir Henry suppressed a cry; and, recollecting that he had guests, said: "Gentlemen, take cigars and some brandy and soda. Tellifer, help them, will you?"

As the American, who could not help perceiving that, for some mysterious reason, he might not see Lady Merton, led his countrymen to the sideboard, he looked significantly in Mr. Parley's eyes.

"'Pears like," said Mr. Parley.

"Sure?" asked Mr. Tellifer.

"Wouldn't sweer. That ar haar onto his scalp and a ornamentin' the kiver uv his lie-box, and that ar microscope a growin' inter his left eye, and his Sund'y close bothers me. Them's new. But that's the old

scar, or its twin brother. We must wait and let Mumps work."

When they were seated with lighted cigars and charged glasses :

"I understood Mr. Tellifer to say that you had hunted in the West," remarked Sir Henry. "It must be fine sport."

"Rayther," replied Mr. Mumps.

"Tell Sir Henry how you got that mark," prompted Mr. Tellifer.

"Well, yer see, Colonel," said Mr. Mumps, "one day in the Rockies, I was tired uv killin' game, so I leaned my rifle agin' a ledge, and was sorter loafin', sorter prospectin' round, when, in a steep place, the ground kinder gin way, and I slid down two or three hunderd foot, and landed jest at the door uv a grizzly's palace. The old lady happened ter be t' hum, but it 'peared like she and the childern was on the pint uv goin' out, for thar she stud with her bonnet on, not two yards inside that ar door, lookin' at me, a biddin' uv me good-day, and smilin'. My revolver had tumbled out uv my pocket, as I cum down, so I hadn't no arms but my knife; I thought I'd offer that ar t' her, kinder's ef I would be perlite, seein' she was a lady, and sorter like I was surrenderin', but really on purpose to concilerate her. She got up and stud on her hine feet, es ef she wanted ter show her respec' and warn't goin' ter be outdone in perliteness, and then waltzed towards me, invitin' me ter dance. But before I could put that ar knife int' her reach she got mad, becuse I warn't quicker, and whack! I thought a thunderbolt had got the drop on me, and when I stopped rollin' and tumblin' heels over head down

that mountain it was at a squatter's cabin two thousand foot below. But all uv me didn't get thar. That ar baar, she'd kep the end uv my nose and my right cheek, kinder like one uv them carts-de-visits when the side face is tuk, ter put inter her album, es a souveny uv the honor I did her, and ter kinder keep my feeters in her manshun."

"Mighty lucky escape!" exclaimed the Baronet.

"A very near call, wasn't it?" added Mr. Teller.

"A deuced close shave!" remarked the Hon. Mr. Glyder, whose emulation was aroused. "Reminds me of how I got this scar."

"Tell them about that, Glyder," said Sir Henry.

"A party of us," began the Hon. Mr. Glyder, "were out looking for tigers in India, and particularly for a man-eater. Somehow I got separated from the rest, when suddenly there was a movement in the bush, and before I could put rifle to shoulder, the man-eater was coming through the air straight at me. I dodged, for once, although it hurt my pride to do so, and made me feel that I had degraded the name of Briton, and that England was humbled by that motion. But the reluctance caused by such feelings so held me back that I did not dodge far enough. The beast's unsheathed claw struck just at the corner of my mouth, and cut a furrow to my ear, a thorough subsoiler, going down to the bone."

"And he got away?" asked Mr. Mumps.

"Not much, as you would say. Quicker than a flash, and before his body was past me, I jumped on to him, knit my legs round him, and while he was making prodigious leaps, half scared to death, I felt

for his heart, and let my hunting knife into it. His skin is now at our place in England."

"Can you come up to that, Parley?" asked Mr. Teller.

"I should smile!" returned Mr. Parley, with mild scorn; but no part of his countenance indicated that he would or could in any event do what he suggested. "That wus nuthin' to what happened to me 'n' a panther."

"Indeed?" queried the Hon. Mr. Glyder.

"Yes, Judge, that's so."

And Mr. Parley, resting his elbows on his knees, and taking a toothpick from his vest pocket, which he turned over in his fingers, probably as an aid to composition, went on in a monotonous, nasal, rather dreamy, and drawling tone to tell his adventure:

"Yer see we was prospectin' for grizzlies and other small game, and bein' sorter tired I cum inter camp arly. After puttin' up my rifle, I sot down outside fer ter clean my revolvers. All uv a suddint I heerd a yell, and lookin' up thar war a leetle the biggest panther I'd ever seen, a flyin' down ont' me from a tree; 'pear'd like he war a slidin' down on the air like a flyin' squirrel. His eyes looked like the head-lights uv a locomotive in the night, and his paws was spread out zef he wanted t' embrace me. I hadn't no time to do nuthin,' and I knowed it. So what does I do, havin' a good chaw uv terbacker in my mouth—it was that New Orleans terbacker, yer know, Mumps, alfred hot—wall, havin' this big chaw uv terbacker in my mouth, as I war sayin'—I'd got out uv terbacker that mornin' and borrored this uv one uv the party—wall, havin' this big chaw in my mouth—that thar

Louisany terbacker—and my mouth full uv juice—alfired hot it war too—I rekileckt now, I got it uv Dave Johnson, you remember him, Mumps—wall, what does I do but just set whar I war till the beauty got near enough, and then I squirted that ar chaw uv terbacker, and all that ar juice, straight int' his open jaws. Yer should have looked at the crittur. It was about *the* sickest kitten you ever seen ; so sick that he doubled up sorter ball-like, and went clean over my head, and only his back haar tiched the tip uv my scalp kinder soft like, and before I could git my rifle, he had scrambled inter the bush and away, cryin' and lamentin'."

"Was that all?" inquired the Hon. Mr. Glyder.

"No, Square, that warn't all. Don't you be in a hurry. I reckon I'm a tellin' this story," replied Mr. Parley in unchanged tones. "Wall, the next day but one my pardners was all out and I was loafin' about the camp when I heerd a kind uv a meawin' and purrin' in the bush. I looked and thar war that ar panther a rubbin' back and forth agin a tree jest like a cat, a lookin' et me 'n' purrin'. An' every leetle while he would meaw. My fust idee war ter git my rifle and knock him over ; but thar war thet so kinder frienly in his ways thet I sorter hated fur ter do't. So we stud lookin' et each other, him a rubbin' his shiny coat agin that ar tree and meawin'. An' then it cum onter me like a flash : the tarnation critter wants another chaw uv terbacker ! So what does I do but pull out a plug and throw it t' him. Yer should 'ave seen how tickled he war. He picked it up and bit off a big chaw, and then pulled off a broad leaf and spread it on the ground and laid th'

rest uv th' terbacker önter it so kurfually. An' then he looked straight et me 'n' purred louder 'n ever, an' then trotted away into the bush."

"Do you expect us to believe that is true?" asked Mr. Glyder.

"Darned ef it ain't, every word," replied Mr. Parley. "Who saw it, you or I? I thought I wer a bossin' this story. Wall, the next day he cum back fur his chaw, 'n' this time he jest sot up whar he war 'n' chawed 'n' spit es nicely es ever yer see a ambituous boy a larnin'. An' he went on improvin' 'n' growin' frienly tell 'fore long he stayed with me all the time, 'n' could chaw more terbacker 'n' any twenty men, an' yer might pick yer best. When he died, a year or two ago, I skun him fur to have his hide stuffed fur old companionship sake, 'n' I found thet his skin wur already tanned by th' terbacker. That hide I have now et my place in the States."

"I think Mr. Parley's panther is the champion; I do, indeed, you know," said Sir Henry.

"But you have not yet heard my story," protested Mr. Tellifer.

"Excuse me. Fill your glasses, gentlemen, and let us have Mr. Tellifer's."

"What I am going to tell is history, of which I was a small part," began Mr. Tellifer. "I have looked into the whole of it and can vouch for its truth. In the year 18— I was at a new town in the Rocky Mountains, called Panopolis. On a certain Tuesday a felon calling himself Jonathan Wilder, who had that day been sentenced to State's Prison for forgery, was passing his last evening in jail. The deputy jailer, Bill Mundly, was compassionate enough to bear him

company, and imprudent enough to treat him like a white man. By infamous treachery and the most revolting assault this Wilder got the better of Bill, and made his escape from jail, but could only free himself entirely by stabbing the faithful deputy. On the Thursday night next following, this same Wilder way-laid and, by a cunningly-devised show of dummy robbers and quaker guns, actually stopped the stage coach, went through the passengers, of whom I was one, and then ran off with horses, coach, and luggage. This last he threw down a precipice, and in a convenient cave overhauled it at leisure. Among the things which he fancied was a very peculiar cravat pin made expressly for me, and the like of which I was sure did not exist till at our first meeting I saw that which the Hon. Mr. Glyder wears."

"Really, now, your highwayman must have been bold, yes, very bold, and cunning; he was, indeed, you know," remarked the Baronet.

"He was desperate. With his plunder, in which were fire-arms and ammunition, he struck through the mountains and happened to arrive near the cabin of some prospectors just in time to raise the siege which, after killing his partner, a small party of Indians were pressing against the sole survivor, who was holding the shanty. He told this man a cock-and-bull story, and the grateful gold-seeker helped him on his way; at least, did not hinder him. And we have been hunting him almost ever since."

"We? Who?" asked the Hon. Mr. Glyder.

"Bill Mundly, that is, Mumps, Parley, the surviving gold-seeker, and I. Bill is not ordinarily a profane man, but he swore some remarkable oaths that he

would get even with Jonathan Wilder ; and Parley, who is his relation, was willing to come with him and look for a scar."

"Could't you find his track ?" enquired Sir Henry.

"The rascal covered it too well. He was disguised all the time at Panopolis, and when he reached the prospector's hut the first thing he did was to throw away his wig, take off his beard and moustache, and completely change his appearance. The only indications we have are his height, shape, colour of eyes, kind of nose, a singular way of putting two fingers to his lower lip, as—pardon me—our good friend the Hon. Mr. Glyder is doing just now, and is in the habit of doing, and a scar across his cheek, exposed by taking off his beard, which Parley came to look for, just like that—pardon me again—which the Hon. Mr. Glyder wears, and which he told Parley he got from a tiger's claw when hunting, very much—pardon me once more—as the Hon. Mr. Glyder says he received his—I think you told me you had been in America ?"

"I ? Never !" replied the Hon. Frank. "In India, I told you I had been in India."

I can't be mistaken. Don't you remember, to hunt buffaloes with your friend Lord ——"

"Oh, I was fooling—gassing, as you would say stuffing you."

"Well, lately," went on Mr. Tellifer, "we have come across something that looks uncommonly like his track. Some rascal has been forging Lady Merton's name as drawer, and Don Foresti's name as endorser of cheques——"

"What ! What !" exclaimed the Baronet, "It is impossible ! Are you sure of this ?"

"Positively."

For some minutes the Hon. Mr. Glyder had been very busy with his pocket handkerchief holding and wiping his nose. Presently Sir Henry, spite of the perturbation caused by this last piece of news, noticed it.

"Nose bleed, Glyder?" asked he.

Glyder nodded an affirmative.

"Step into my room; you'll find cold water there."

"Be so kind as to suspend your story till I come back, Mr. Tellifer, I want to hear the finish," said the Hon. Mr. Glyder as he rose to go.

The Baronet's room opened immediately out of the one in which they were sitting. The Hon. Glyder went into it and shut the door. Mr. Tellifer sprang up in an excited manner.

"Can he leave that chamber any other way than by that door?" he demanded of Sir Henry.

"Yes," was the reply, "by a door opening into that corridor."

As any person passing along the corridor could inevitably be seen through an open door from where the gentlemen were, Mr. Tellifer resumed his seat.

"That fellow is no other than Jonathan Wilder," said he.

"What's that you say? Stuff and nonsense! Excuse me, but you must be losing your senses," retorted the Baronet. "He is the son of old Lord Glyder."

"Do you *know* this?"

"Well, I—ahem—I—ah—do not—no, I do not know it, certainly."

"Even if Lord Glyder did have the misfortune to beget him he is none the less Jonathan Wilder, the man we want, the man who sliced Mumps's, that is Bill Mundly's face."

"It wasn't a grizzly?"

"Nary a grizzly," replied Mumps. "It was Jonathan Wilder, and by doin' it he got off for the time bein.' That grizzly yarn was a put up job to make him brag and blab about his tiger hunt. Knowin' he war desperate and would probably finish me, since he'd gone so far, and feelin' pretty well cut inter as it war, I jest played possum, and let him think I war a goner. But we've got him now inter that ar room fur sure, es sartain es my name's Bill Mundly."

"But about those cheques, Mr. Teller, made by Lady Merton," said Sir Henry nervously, rising and attempting to draw the American to oneside.

"Her name was signed by this fellow Glyder to cheques made payable to Don Foresti, and then he forged Don Foresti's endorsement. He employed his servant in getting the cash for them, and he was a great deal better educated, and a great deal less inclined to serve his master than was believed. That servant put me on the scent of this. I will tell you all about it later."

"What have I done! What have I done!" murmured the Baronet, sinking into a chair, from which a few seconds later he rose to pour out and swallow a strong dose of brandy. None of the persons present noticed him, their thoughts being suddenly turned entirely to the room into which the Hon. Glyder had gone by Mr. Parley's words:

"I'm consarned that the tarnation critter's a bleedin' ter death."

The notion that the felon might have committed suicide and thus escape startled Mr. Teller and Bill Mundly.

"Will you permit us to see what he is doing?"

asked Mr. Tellifer of the Baronet. They opened the door—no one was to be seen. They ran into the room, looked under the bed, into the closets, the fireplace, up the chimney, and then in the farthest corner of the spacious room—out of the window, which they now perceived to be open. This window, thirty or forty yards from the arched carriage way which led from the street to the park, in the rear, through the middle of the building, and into which descended the hall stairs, the outlet of the apartment, was at the extreme end of the palace, and looked on the park. It was, at least, twenty-five or thirty feet from the ground. Close to it grew a stout vine. Sir Henry's hat was gone, and so, evidently, was the Hon. Mr. Glyder, *alias* Jonathan Wilder. His course was evident. He had got down by the vine, kept in the shade of trees and shrubbery growing by the wall of the park, and thus avoided the policemen whom Mr. Tellifer had instructed and stationed, and who were now cooling their heels in the arched carriage way, waiting to arrest a fugitive whom they were expecting to see leaping down the broad steps, madly intent on making his escape.

For a few seconds the three men looked at one another in silence. Then Mr. Tellifer rushed down to alarm the policemen. When he came back Bill Mundly was fairly roaring curses, and when he paused to take breath :

"I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Mumps, for my part," said Mr. Tellifer, who never swore profanely. "It's very consoling ; please go on."

Mr. Parley drawled, with unchanged countenance and intonation :

"He's a darned mean slippery snake, without the chivulry uv a rattler."

"Well, I'll be —— ef we're not three uv the ——est fine lookin thief-catchers out of jail!" resumed Bill Mundry. "We ought ter give lessons! Why ——tion, we had him in our hands, and we knew it! Faugh! it makes me sick. Anybody who wants it may have what's left of my head ter throw at gophers. We were so dog-goned smart—wanted to play at cat and mouse, and by blue blazes, we've had good sport! Wanted ter identify an identification, an' we've done it! Wanted some fun, an' we've had it! Wanted ter play theatre, an' we've played it! Augh! Somebody ought ter take us t' th' hospital!"

Plainly, the hunt was up, and must be recommenced.

"You see now, Sir Henry," said Mr. Teller, as he and his companions were about to take leave of the Baronet, "that the man Glyder has confessed his rascality by running away; and I hardly think you will exact an apology for the use we have made of your house. He said this afternoon that he was coming out, and asked me to accompany him; but I declined. Thinking, however, it would be a good occasion to make sure of his identity, I took the liberty of bringing my fellow hunters——"

"Sir," cried the Baronet, interrupting, "I am very grateful to you for so doing, and there are matters brought to my notice this evening in regard to which I beg the favour of an early interview; yes, sir, I assure you, a very early interview."

XXX.

AFTER Mary had gone into the convent and Hugh was left alone with his father-in-law, the recollection of that knife sent a chill through him. He had determined to be back in the city that night without seeing Sir Henry or Vivy. He wanted time to think and prepare before meeting either of them ; but, more than this, he felt the importance of an interview with and obtaining the pardon and silence of Nina ere she should speak to her father. Yet he did not wish to make a night journey in the sole company of Pio.

“What do you purpose ?” asked he. “I think of going to my father at the villa for the night. If it were not so late I would ask you to go with me.”

“Thank you,” replied Pio, “but I should not accept. I must return. I have not yet heard my Nina’s voice. I want to hear it, and I want to see her, and to hold her in my arms, knowing me. I will be there early in the morning. It is not so very late. I can get to Cecchina in time for the evening train from Naples.”

“Then we will meet at the hospital. I am most impatient to see my poor Nina and the baby, and have an explanation of all that has happened. Whatever could have made her do it? Till to-morrow morning, then, at Rome. Good night,” and the two men shook hands.

Pio took the street that led into the Cecchina road, and Hugh turned towards the villa in which the Baronet was residing. But the moment Nina's father was out of sight, the young man began to look for a carriage of some kind, and soon discovered a cab with horse and driver fast asleep. The man, however, would not think of forcing his worn out beast across the Campagna. Yet he did what was better; he brought Hugh to a stable where fresh horses could be got, and as the youth willingly agreed to almost any terms, a bargain was soon concluded. An hour and a half later he entered his room in the Corso.

Pio, walking down the Cecchina road, had got about a mile, more or less, from the main street of Albano, when he was startled by the footfalls of someone running in the adjacent vineyard, and presently a man hastily threw himself over the separating wall into the road. At first sight of Pio the person who had so unexpectedly come upon him stopped a moment, as if he would turn back, in which time the Italian recognised his master. The recognition appeared to be reciprocal, for the Hon. Mr. Glyder advanced towards his man, exclaiming, in vulgar, though strong language, what may more elegantly and with fitting sibilation be rendered thus:

"So, you sentenced, sanguinary son of a she Satan, you have betrayed me, have you? you doomed villain and idiot! I can't stop to make things square now, but I shan't forget you." And then he turned to go.

But what he had heard, coupled with what he knew already, informed Pio that the Hon. Mr. Glyder was fleeing from justice. And he had reason to sympathize very much with justice; was willing to make common

cause with her, if only she would wake up and open her eyes, and act vigorously. Meanwhile he would venture to act for her, to take some precautions in her name, to prepare, as it were, her way. So, without a word, he sprang at and threw his arms about Glyder, pinioning that gentleman, and, at the same time trying to throw him. The felon growled a horrible blasphemy and curse, and struggled to free himself.

The men were not very unevenly matched. Pio was the stronger, but was fasting, and had run off all his freshness in the pursuit of Hugh, so that the advantage was rather on the side of Glyder. Not a word was spoken, no sound but the stamping of feet and their strained breathing was heard from the antagonists. The moonlight fell alternately on their faces as they writhed and turned, showing, in knotted brows, glaring eyes, and clenched teeth, equal hate and determination. All about crickets were chirping, and in a distant pool a chorus of frogs, in antiphonal chant, were crying, "Kill 'im ! kill 'im !"

Glyder did not lose his self-control, and only endeavoured to preserve his footing and a base broad enough to prevent an overthrow, till he could free his arms from the bear-like hug ; while Pio was putting forth all his skill and strength to give his enemy a fall. Each felt that he was contending against an inexorable hate, and that the encounter was deadly. But, carried on in this manner, the contest was unequal. After some minutes of continuous violent exertion, Pio's wind showed the effects of it, and his hug weakened, while Glyder was still comparatively fresh.

Taking advantage of an incautious movement, the

Englishman threw his whole weight on to the Italian, who, to save himself from falling underneath, was forced to break his hold. Even then he only recovered his equilibrium after staggering back several yards. As soon as he was free Glyder sprang away and drew a revolver. Pio saw the movement, and prepared his knife as he rushed at his opponent, who, on second thought, decided not to use fire-arms, for fear of guiding pursuers to the spot. He awaited Pio in his tracks, but miscalculated the impetus which broke through his guard, drove him some steps back, and deferred for a second, time enough for the knife to get at its work, the blow he was ready to deliver. Then the heavy pistol fell with a dull thud, and a muffled, soft sound of crushing on to Pio's head, and twice again, with savage fury, as the victims fell together like an ox beneath the hammer that breaks his skull.

"There!—you. That'll do. I'll trust you now," said Glyder, bending and looking intently at his fallen enemy for a few moments, noticing the quivering of his limbs.

And now he became aware, for the first time, that he himself was wounded, badly, it appeared. Blood was running freely, much too freely from his side. What should he do? Fly, fly, of course, while and so long as he had strength. But whither?

At a very early hour the next morning Hugh was at the hospital, greatly relieved not to see Pio, and feverishly anxious to get admission; not only to take Nina in his arms, and make her all the amends that words and kisses could effect, and to see his child, his own boy, his! but also to be sure of an interview with her before the father should arrive. There seemed to

be some question whether he could be allowed to see her : they said she was still very feeble ; did not rally, lay in what appeared to be a stupor of weakness and depression ; sometimes, when for a few minutes, she would fall into a troubled sleep, murmuring, " Not married ! Not married ! "

At length, thanks to his explanation, his earnest insistence, his evident distress, and his confident assurance that he could do more to revive her than all the doctors and nurses of the hospital, he was admitted. They had prepared her for his coming, and when he entered her room and saw her so white—white, as if she were purity itself, lying with her big eyes, dark orbs imprisoning light, fixed on him, tears showed his emotion as he hastened to her, and kneeling by the cot, with his arms around her, kissed those lovely eyes, her lips, cheeks, forehead, hair, murmuring in low, broken tones, passionate words of endearment, self-condemnation, vows of repentance, and prayers for pardon.

Nina uttered no sound, but her tears flowed unchecked. She appeared to be entirely passive, submitting to Hugh's caresses from want of strength to resist, but making no response. He lifted her somewhat, and laid her head on his shoulder, and then she whispered :

" Is it true, Ugolino ; dear Ugolino, is it true ? "

" What, darling ? "

" That we are not married."

" No, it is not true, dearest. It is a d—— lie, and I am an accursed villain for uttering it."

" We were married, then ? We are ? " She had raised her head ; all apathy was gone ; a tremulous, almost wild excitement had taken its place.

"Truly, my love, my own Nina. We were truly married before the Church and before God, and as soon as you are able we will be before the law of this country."

"Oh, darling! darling! Oh, thank God! The blessed Madonna did pray for me. Oh, I am so happy! My Ugolino, my own, own Ugolino! Ah, I am so glad now that I did not die!" And she threw her arms about his neck and fervently kissed him again and again.

"Bless you, dear."

"When I fell into the water—it was by accident—I was so sorry I did not know where I was going—after the first fearful feeling I was glad, since I did not do it myself, and should not be guilty of my own death."

"My poor little girl! What a fiend I have been!"

"No, Ugolino; no. You had some great temptation. But it has all come right—and—our baby—you have not seen our baby—our baby has come, and it is a boy, a little angel, a cherub, and he looks just like my Ugolino. Oh, I am so happy!" Her lovely face was covered with smiles, a faint rose tint appeared in her cheeks, her strength seemed to have come back as though by a miracle.

An attendant brought the baby from some corner where it had been hidden, and although Hugh was disposed to call it a wretched little red rascal, and to hope it looked like anything more than himself, yet for Nina's sake he took the creature in his arms, and went through the form with the motions of caressing and kissing it, really feeling a fatherly pride in, and affection for, the mite, yet preferring to wait some months, if he could have had his own way, before

expressing these feelings in a manner satisfactory to mothers. But he praised the boy willingly enough, especially his size and his marks of intelligence !

When he was about to go away, promising to come again very soon, he had redeemed his pledge to do more than all the nurses and doctors in the hospital to make Nina well.

"Now, little girl, my darling," said he, "I must end this visit, or you will be tired——"

"Oh, no !"

"Besides, I must get some breakfast."

"Will you certainly come back again very soon ?"

"Certainly, yes."

"And the good man who rescued me, perhaps he will come. We must find and thank him, somehow. Only think, dear, but for him——"

Hugh was tempted to tell her who the brave man was, but on second thought concluded it would be more prudent not to say anything about him then.

"Good-bye, *mamma mia piccolina*."

"Ah, Ugolino, dearest !"

"Darling !"

"Will you truly come back again very soon ? Will you ?"

"I surely will if God spares my life."

"Yes. I know now that you will when you look at me like that and promise. I am satisfied, dearest Ugolino."

"Rest, little one ; rest, darling," and embracing her tenderly he went out.

Hugh was not long absent. He wished to be present at the first interview between Nina and her father, and in order to make sure of this, and not

over fatigue or over excite his wife, remained in the waiting-room, unknown to her, till nearly noon. Still Pio came not. The son-in-law began to feel the uneasiness of a vague apprehension. Then he went and sat some time with Nina, telling his plans for her and the baby. She could think of nothing so much as of having the infant baptized, and they discussed names, and agreed on a day for the ceremony. Leaving her, he spent the afternoon looking for an apartment in which to put his wife when she could be moved. Then he went back to tell of his success and bid her good-night, also with the hope of having some news of Pio.

The next day, after making an early visit to Nina, he took the cars for Albano. He was anxious about Lady Merton, and very desirous of learning what had occurred between her and Sir Henry, what the "tremendous row" had been, and how much Vivy had done to bring it about.

XXXI.

AFTER Mr. Teller and his companions had departed, Sir Henry threw himself into a chair, and remained some minutes overwhelmed with most depressing reflections. By-and-by, without noting the lateness of the hour, he asked for Vivy, and the maid told him she had gone to bed with a head ache, and locked her door. The Baronet uttered an exclamation of impatience. He was becoming exceedingly anxious because of the prolonged absence of Lady Merton. He had been shocked and extremely mortified by the evening's revelations in regard to the Hon. Mr. Glyder, and would have found great relief in talking of these things, in expressing his surprise and disgust to a sympathizing listener, and in hearing that he had not really acted unjustly, harshly, and abominably, towards his wife. That he had wronged her he freely admitted to himself, since, whatever else she might have done amiss, the head and front of her offending was that apparent donation of money to Don Foresti, and the relations proved thereby. But after all, really he did not know why she should take a little quarrel and a few hasty words so seriously, and act so foolishly, so precipitately, causing him so much solicitude.

Minute after minute, and hour after hour, he waited,

listening for her return, ready, if needful, to fall on his knees and ask her pardon ; but she came not. He could fix his thoughts on nothing else, and could do nothing except seek for calmness and fortitude in his trials, and counsel for his future guidance at his usual source of inspiration. Gradually the final scene with Lady Merton, the visitors of the evening and their stories, the disclosures relative to the man who, at dinner time, had sat at his table as a friend, with their results, became mixed chaotically in his mind, and he was able to distinguish neither beginning nor end, cause nor effect. Sleep he could not ; and daylight, peeping into the room unperceived, for the lamps were still burning, though with diminished brightness, saw him with rosy, humid eyes, and flushed face, now walking the floor in a purposeless way, now sinking with a groan into his armchair, but not to rest ; presently rising and resuming his unsteady walk. At length sleep, and—and his efforts to secure calmness, fortitude, and counsel, overcame him, and having fallen into the seat, he did not rise to repeat his walk, but settled together and into hollows of the Turkish easy-chair, in a manner that indicated an astonishing corporal adaptability. In about twenty-five seconds he was breathing somewhat like a small steam engine and felt no longer any need of calmness, fortitude, or counsel.

The same daylight that, with the alertness and innocence of a child refreshed by slumber and early awake, had looked curiously into the room where was Sir Henry, first took a peep at Mary in the chamber that had been hired for the night ; had seen that proud lady on her knees, with her face, now white

almost as they, half hidden in the coverings of a nun's bed, in which, clearly, no one had slept that night ; had heard her voice in murmurs, broken by long pauses, and had caught the words : " Help me ! help me ! Oh, merciful Father, help ! Give me a forgiving heart. Ah, it is so hard ! Oh, grant me a forgiving heart and take me——" Then, after remaining silent and motionless some time, she suddenly sprang up and began to walk the length of the room like a caged animal. A few minutes later, clasping her head with both hands, and visibly shrinking, she exclaimed : " I cannot bear it, I cannot ! The utter, aggravated humiliation, the vindictive degradation, wanton, calculated cruelty ! Oh, my love, my love, that was my life—where is it ? Tortured, mangled, murdered ! And by whom ? The god that I trusted as if he could and would do all things for me, even to the assuring of my eternal salvation ! Love and pride both beaten down and ruthlessly trampled—neither spared, though they be enemies. With one unharmed to sustain me I might live, but now——"

The moment anyone was astir in the convent she expressed a desire to leave, saying that, clad as she was, without a bonnet, she would rather not be seen in the street after people should be abroad, and that now she could go unnoticed. One of the sisters brought coffee, for which Mary thanked her, trying to smile ; but, left alone, she emptied her cup out of the window, that they might not know she had drunk none of it. Going out she thanked the nuns, saying that now she could not make the community a gift, as she would greatly like to do in acknowledgment of their hospitality, but that it should be remembered. The

good women, remarking her paleness, and the unnatural size and brightness of her eyes, begged her to stay with them ; but they could not insist, nor would they ask questions ; and, believing she was going back to a home which, for some unhappy reason, she had left the night before, allowed her to depart.

It was still prime. Only a few of the poorer people were out of doors, most of these going into the neighbouring church for early Mass. A vague feeling like envy, and a longing for their faith, to have their source of infinite consolation, passed through her as she paused to watch them. Up from the main street came a jangle of small bells, sent out by wine carts returning from Rome. A herd of goats were waiting to be milked, some standing, some lying on the church steps, all chewing cuds and contented. She found a way and climbed the hillside above the town. The broad Campagna was spread out before her, with its rich carpet in patches of tender green, pale yellow, old gold, bright brown, and all the intermediate shades. In the middle distance was the eternal city under a gauzy veil of mist, and to the left the blue waters of the midland sea. What strange fascination was in those waters, never felt before, inviting, drawing, as though to her soul were addressed an enravishing exhortation by gentle, alluring spirits, to come and find sympathy, peace, repose, solace in the tranquil depths ?

As she gazed this kind of infatuation grew. If she could get there, and why not ? Only a walk across the smooth Campagna—eight or ten miles—and what was that for a last walk, and after it so long a rest ? Musing in this strain she advanced slowly. Suddenly, turning her eyes to the right, she saw almost below

her the lake, and started with a thrill, like a person unexpectedly taken at his word. It seemed as if this sheet of water was thus brought to her view with a purpose ; to make the execution of her, as yet hardly formed wish easy and sure. Now the question put itself actually : Would she seek relief and oblivion by drowning herself, or not ? But her mind could entertain no question ; it was benumbed ; or, rather, it was overwhelmed, buried in a cataclysm of passion ; its very foundations were moved ; it was tossed and driven by wild, ungovernable currents. And these currents whirled her on towards the catastrophe. Yes, Sir Henry should know that she had been compelled to death by him, who had sworn to cherish her, and when he should be sure that she had been always innocent, faithful, loving—She had only to go down the old crater's steep sides, now tapestried with verdure and early spring flowers, to lie down on the grassy shore, and turn over, as in sleep, towards the sweet caresses of the lulling water.

To arrive at what appeared the easiest place of descent into the lake-bowl, she came down to the upper gallery, and walked with feverish movements towards Castel Gondolfo. She had proceeded some distance, and now, from the road, could have seen almost the whole extent of the water. But, utterly absorbed in her purpose, she noted nothing. Recollections and thoughts grew every moment more intolerable. A sense of the ignominy, which her own husband had brought upon her, of the inconceivable degradation there was in even the possibility that she could be supposed guilty of the unutterable meanness and vulgar dishonesty and abominable infidelity necessarily

comprised in the accusations against her, came over her like a flood of red hot lava. Her own husband, her trusted and worshipped lover, in disregard of all the pleadings and expostulations of love, in violation of the principles even of honourable warfare, contrary to the fair courtesy which prevails between enemies of gentle condition, had pursued her covertly as though she were a wily and reckless criminal, who must be circumvented and caught cunningly! And now he was elated by the belief that the charges against her were proved, and triumphing in his success—his success over her!

As she walked swiftly forward, cherishing in this way her own anguish,—

“Lady Merton!” exclaimed a voice.

She started like a person suddenly aroused from sleep, and looked up. There, three paces before her, a look of surprise in the mild orbs that were fixed upon her, stood Don Foresti. A scared look came into her face as, stopping short like a timid sheep intercepted in its course after the flock, she seemed to be balancing as to which way she should leap and escape past him who blocked the way.

“Dear Lady Merton, do you not recognise me? Will you not speak to me?” asked the priest in his gentlest tones. He inferred at once that the catastrophe prepared by Vivy had been consummated and all the sympathy of his charitable heart went out to Mary, and he yearned to help her.

“I cannot talk with you—not now—not now,” she replied, looking nervously around, her hands pressing each other alternately. “Later—you will know;” and she attempted to pass him. But the wily priest

frustrated her purpose by turning and walking at her side. "Excuse me—I beg pardon—Don Foresti," she said presently, stopping and turning towards him. "This morning I—I desire to be alone—and I have especial reasons for—for wishing—for not daring—for thinking it most imprudent that we should be seen together—in this place—at this hour—after this night. How came you here?"

"I ran out last evening from Rome to see a sick brother at the little community there, where I slept. Now I go to Albano, whither I am called." He fixed on her a searching look; she would not encounter his gaze, but glanced with quickly-changing regard in different directions.

He had at first been struck by her strange costume, her pallor, the excitement evidenced by her eyes and her nervous movements, the anguish in her countenance, and by meeting her in that place at that hour. And now he perceived that she was not only suffering mental wretchedness, but that she was morally ill; the balance of her mind unhinged. He could not but infer that for no healthful purpose was she taking this walk, desiring to be left alone; it was easy to guess that, in her morbid condition, she nourished intentions dangerous to herself; and, at any rate, it was a plain duty of Christian charity not to heed her request.

"Will you not let me go my way alone?" she asked in touching tones of entreaty.

"You must pardon me, dear Lady Merton, if I persist in obtruding my company on you for a short time. It is clear that you are in deep trouble, the cause of which, unless I greatly err, is to me not

wholly unknown. For, not long ago Sir Henry charged me with dishonestly receiving cheques from you——”

“And you? ——”

“I denied it.”

“Indignantly?”

“And solemnly.”

“He durst!—was not ashamed—to you——”

“So you see that we are both included in this accusation. Let us not be overcome by it, but have patience and courage, trusting in God to make the truth appear in His own time. You will be righted——”

“Oh, it is impossible! He has outraged, insulted, degraded me, made me out the very most despicable, meanest, most crawling of criminals, and he! he, my husband! Oh how awfully am I punished for adoring him! I cannot bear it—I am crushed—here—here.— Oh, my God, how I suffer!” and, clasping her hands passionately to her breast, she sank moaning and sobbing to her knees, with her head bent low, as if actually borne down by material weight.

“My poor friend! my dear lady! would that I could bear this for you! A very heavy cross is laid upon you, and He who determined its gravity knows your strength, and will increase it if needful. Have good courage; try to be patient. I will give you all the aid in my power. Be assured, I beg, that I feel for and with you.”

By this time she was sobbing wildly, her whole body shaken as if convulsed, while her tears flowed abundantly. Fetters of the ice-bound stream had been melted by words of sympathy. The emotions

that, while pent, only accumulated force, now burst forth like a torrent, and the pressure, which had threatened destruction, would soon be relieved. But the situation was sufficiently embarrassing to Don Foresti. Fortunately, owing to the time of day, the road, here partly screened by trees, was deserted.

The priest made no attempt to check or interrupt the course of this outpouring, which was like perilous stuff escaping by a safety-valve. He knew that it was effecting the salvation of Lady Merton's reason. Not till its violence was spent, and only convulsive sighs, like distant moaning of the heavens, growing fainter and fainter, when a tempest is passing away, or the resounding waves, after a gale has ceased, still told how great had been the storm of passions, did he speak again. Taking her hand deferentially and lifting her up he said :

"My dear lady, I cannot leave you to go your way alone. I must respectfully insist on accompanying you. And I think it would be well to proceed now. Later the road will not be so free."

"I do not wish to—I—I have changed my mind."

"And do not intend to pursue your walk?"

"No, I—I have given it up."

"Then shall we go back?"

"Back! Whither?"

"To your villa, of course."

Yielding to the silent authority of Don Foresti, Mary had turned with him, and they were walking towards Albano.

"I cannot do that." Lady Merton spoke more quietly and naturally than she had yet done, and also

very decisively. After a few moments of silence she continued :

“ You have seen me as no one else ever has ; weak, broken, overcome, driven out of myself. I ought to apologise for making an exhibition of feminine feebleness so mortifying ; truly I am ashamed of it, and of me. But I cannot undo it, and, above all, cannot recall words. I said things which I should not have uttered, and which I was resolved never, or, rather, which it was repugnant to my nature ever to reveal, by so much as a hint. But, since I did speak of certain matters, it is but just to me and others that I should do so more fully. Then you can, and, I am sure, will, give me the counsel that I need.”

“ Willingly will I listen, and, if you wish it, what you say shall be kept as sacredly as though it were under the seal of confession. But first, let us decide whither you shall go. Pardon me, but your costume and yourself will be remarked, known as you are to many of the people about here, curiosity aroused, conjectures made, gossip and scandal set on foot. Besides, you yourself said it would not be prudent for us to show ourselves in this way together. Therefore let me advise you, if you will not go home——”

“ I have none,” broke in Mary, bitterly.

“ To seek temporary refuge in the convent——”

“ I passed the night there.”

“ Then, by all means, return. I will go with you and speak to the Superior ; and can think of nothing better. There you may deliberate as to your future course——”

“ But I have no money, am utterly destitute, shall have nothing till I earn it——”

“Do not speak of that, and, especially, do not wound the charitable hearts of these good sisters by such talk. Go to them ; it is the thing for this day ; the only thing, as far as I can see. The morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.”

And as they went Lady Merton told all the cause of her trouble, begging the priest to counsel her. In a short time they re-entered the convent.

“I wish to ask of you a favour,” said Don Foresti.

“Of me?” replied Mary, turning towards him in surprise.

“Yes. It is that when you feel crushed to earth by this anguish you will kneel before a crucifix, and with all the intentness at your command contemplate the sorrows and sufferings there represented ; the agony the ignominy, the false accusations, the taunts, the jeers, the insults, the mockery, the injustice, the cruelty, and try to hear the words: ‘O all ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow.’ ”

Lady Merton hesitated a few moments, with a more thoughtful, calmer look on her face than had yet appeared there, and then said, giving her hand to the priest :

“I will.” And, thanking him, with emotion caused by the thought of what she might have done, but for him, went directly to the room where she had passed the night, which she hoped might be still free for her use. Don Foresti exchanged a few words with the Superior, and then bent his steps towards the villa.

It was like a fatality. Here was Mary in the net and by no contrivance or cunning of Roman Catholics ; but directed and driven by those to whom she natu-

rally had looked for protection. In popular phrase it would be called the irony of fate. Would she escape? Would her good Protestant principles rise up at the last moment strong enough to resist and overcome? Alas! she had read Cardinal Gibbon's book "The Faith of our Fathers," and Cardinal Newman's "Theory of Development," which Mr. Telfer, that emissary in disguise, as Sir Henry called him, had sent to her from London. And now, when her need was greatest, when her pride had received a mortal blow, all that remained of her good Protestant principles seemed to be dying of it as if from pride they had drawn their life and sustenance. Nevertheless, there was ground for hope, and would be so long as pride should linger.

Arrived at the villa, Don Foresti asked to see Sir Henry, and was told that he was still sleeping. The servant did not add that the Baronet had not gone to bed at all, and was still sunk together in an easy-chair, giving no indications of life except a stertorous breathing. The priest, supposing that the husband would be anxious about his wife, had called to tell him that she was in safety. But, if he were yet asleep, evidently his anxiety could not be very troublesome. Nevertheless, to prevent inquiry and search, that might make public the fact of Lady Merton's absence from her family, under extraordinary circumstances, for which there must be some scandalous reason, Don Foresti asked for an envelope, and writing on his card, "Lady Merton is safe and well," he enclosed and directed it to Sir Henry. Then he continued his way to the railway station, and, by the earliest train, returned to Rome and his daily duties.

XXXII.

A LITTLE after dawn of the third morning since the hostile encounter of Pio and his master a monk opened the outer door of a monastery, and saw lying partly on the threshold, the body of a man insensible or dead.

This monastery is among the mountains south-east of the Roman campagna, on the summit of a foot-hill, at the head of, and overlooking, a narrow valley which descends rapidly to the south-west. In the bottom of this vale is the bed of a small river which melting snows or a sudden fall of rain turns into an impetuous torrent. Its sources are miles further up among the higher mountains.

On the same eminence as the monastery, but a little below it, is a picturesque hamlet, that years ago, as is plain from its appearance, had huddled and become fixed beneath the protecting wings of a castle, now in ruins, except a great square tower and some portions of a wall. From abreast this point for two or more leagues, at distances of half a mile to a mile, the valley bends around elbows of mountains by which it seems to be ended ; shutting in the view of the inhabitants, and making this appear a succession of short valleys rather than one long, winding vale. From the mon-

astery, however, these elbows can be overlooked, and the whole course of the river seen, as in a bird's-eye view. Below the two or more leagues, the valley takes a continuous straight direction, widening gradually as it descends.

Its fertile bottom and rather steep slopes are covered with vineyards, olive orchards, and fields of grain, in its season. Resting in seductive nooks, now on one side and now on the other, not far apart are smaller hamlets, humble homes of the peasant cultivators.

Above the point where it comes into this valley the river's course is lost to sight in windings of a ravine. About a mile from the monastery this ravine widens to a broad basin. At the lower end of this, led by the spirit of enterprise which came into existence with Italian unity, some capitalists had constructed a dam, and there formed a lake of large extent containing a great quantity of water. Their intention was to establish manufactures of wool and other raw material. For a short time this had given the valley a fictitious prosperity, signs of which could still be seen. But the speculation failed ; and the costly dam, with mills going to ruin, and the lake, useful only as a fish preserve, were all that witnessed to bold financial enterprise controlled by bad financial judgment.

The startled monk only stopped to be certain that the person lying before him gave signs of life, and then ran to inform his Superior, who, coming quickly, recognised in this unfortunate man the Hon. Frank Glyder, who, some time ago, had been a guest at the monastery, charming the whole community by his humble Christian spirit, and his disposition to join their

order. He had come to them expressing a desire to learn how he might become one of their number ; and although he was then a stranger, with no introduction save some general letters, ostensibly from eminent Churchmen in England, testifying to the excellence of his qualities and character, when he left them they felt sincere regret, softened, however, by the assurance that he was only going away to make some final disposition of his worldly affairs, and would then return to enter on his novitiate.

Time passed and he did not come. Clearly, his worldly affairs must have given him much bother. Yet he might have written. At length the brothers gave up all expectation of seeing him. But, plainly, now he had set out to come in long-delayed fulfilment of that promise, and, plainly, he had been feloniously attacked on the way. For his clothes were stiff with dried blood, and, loosening them, a stab in his side was discovered, which had been clumsily bound up to staunch its bleeding. Where, and how long ago the crime had been committed was a matter of conjecture ; probably not very far from the hamlet ; probably he had soon fainted ; and probably when he recovered consciousness he had spent his little remaining strength, crawling, a short distance at a time, to the monastery, becoming unconscious again when he felt that the end of his journey and of effort had been reached.

Truly, it was touching, this steadfast determination to keep faith, and this turning to that refuge in his great need, showing that his heart had long been there. And so they tenderly lifted and carried him to the airiest room in the infirmary, procured the best

surgical aid that could be obtained, and had the happiness of seeing him at length in possession of his senses. And then he confirmed their conjectures in regard to the object of his journey, the felonious attack, not so very far off, but he could not tell where, ignorant, as he was, of the country, and occurring, as it did, in the night—the night before the last—and his slow approach between fainting fits to this blessed asylum.

The wound would now have caused no great anxiety had it not already begun to inflame and had not the patient shown symptoms of fever; a portentous fever which increased in violence till it brought on delirium. And the brothers were shocked, and scandalized and sickened, horrified and harassed and hurt by the revelations of this frenzy, that spoke out like a possessing, sneering, mocking, jeering, triumphing devil from his throne in the patient. Nevertheless, as though challenged by the fiend, the brave friars responded as became them, and at once had recourse to appropriate siege exercises and modes of attack, believing this to be of the kind that “goeth not out but by prayer and fasting,” while the devil jeered and taunted them as dupes and simpletons.

Clearly, he had deceived them grossly, shamefully, playing upon their artlessness and sincerity, and now, for some reason, in the joy of his triumph, probably, he was making known his duplicity, and mocking them in the success of his cunning. All this only stimulated the brothers who, while strenuously combatting the malady which held the physical, kept on their preparations for an assault on the legion—yes, there must be at least a legion, further listening had

convinced them of it—entrenched in the moral nature. But the fever seemed to prevail against them, and it appeared almost certain that in a few days at longest the hellish garrison would depart with drums beating and colours flying, securely carrying its plunder.

Once, indeed, it was believed that the hour for this triumphal march had come. Two of the brothers were present when the patient's language was even more vehement, more extravagantly warm and suggestive than usual, and in the middle of his out-pouring the holy men suddenly looked at each other with a gaze half of enquiry, half of fear, with an admixture of awe, as they simultaneously crossed themselves.

"You smell it?" asked one, under his breath.

"Certainly. And you?"

"Sensibly, surely. Ah, it is a hard case, an awful case! I will go and tell the Superior."

"We will go together," said the other, not wishing to be left there alone with that patient, just then.

As they retreated towards the door, not daring to look behind, they passed a window into which the spring-time sun was pouring a torrent of heat, when one of them abruptly caught the other's arm.

"Ah! what is it?" exclaimed this one, his teeth suddenly chattering with emotion caused by the other's action.

"See there," and the speaker pointed to a box of sulphur matches which had been left on the window sill, and were now smoking in the sun's rays.

The brothers smiled at each other mildly, and con-

cluded they would not say anything about it to the Superior.

A few hours after Don Foresti had left his card with a message in regard to Lady Merton's safety, Mr. Teller asked for Sir Henry, and continued to call at intervals. Not till late after noon, however, was he received by the Baronet, whose appearance was rather alarming. His face was very red, his eyes almost constantly in motion, his step feeble and unsteady, he had difficulty in controlling his voice, in following a train of thought, or holding part in a sustained conversation. His attention wandered about the room, now fixed upon one particular spot and now on another, in the floor, the walls, the ceiling. With manifest effort, however, he said that Glyder was a swindler, a villain, a d—— scoundrel, and ought to be caught and punished at any cost; he would gladly bear his part of the expense; and he repeated this, saying hardly anything else. But the visitor dissuaded him from taking any steps against the criminal in Italy. The men were again looking for him, and when caught, as doubtless he soon would be, they would take him to America where his punishment, under the sentence now standing against him and that to be pronounced for his attempt on Mundly, would occupy the rest of his life. Besides, a judicial investigation of the charges to be made by Sir Henry would inevitably involve his daughter, Miss Merton, placing her in a very disagreeable position before the public, and bringing scandal on the whole family. Sir Henry asked what she had done, and went off into fresh denunciations of Glyder and tried to speak of and laugh about Messrs. Mumps and Parley. Having

as requested, given the Baronet opportunity for the desired interview, Mr. Tellifer took his leave without seeing Vivy, who kept her room, pretending to be suffering from a very severe headache.

The next day Hugh arrived. As he was getting into the cars at Rome he had bought a newspaper, and in it read that the morning of the day before an unknown man's body had been found in the Cecchina road, not far from Albano, with the skull crushed by blows. The highway retained marks of a furious struggle. The track of a man, who had crossed the wall near the place where this body lay, had been traced back to the bounds of the villa, and it was supposed that the murderer could be no other than a noted criminal, who, on the evening of the crime, had succeeded in eluding the police and making his escape. It struck Hugh that this unfortunate man might be Pio. He had left him to go that road alone on the very night of the murder. And that would explain the fact of his not coming to the hospital.

As soon as he reached Albano he went to view the body exposed for recognition. Sure enough it was that of his father-in-law, whose features he could not forget. After the excitement of that night race had somewhat abated he recollected where he had seen his pursuer before ; namely, in Glyder's service. "He did not and never will hear his darling's voice, for which he had such yearning ; and she will never see her father," were the thoughts that caused Hugh's eyes to grow moist as he gazed at the bloody remains. In answer to the question of an officer present he said that the dead man had been in the service of an English gentleman, the Hon. Mr. Glyder.

"That was the swindler and forger who slipped through the fingers of the Americans night before last at the villa, was it not?" returned the policeman.

Of this Hugh had, as yet, heard nothing, and could give no further information.

"That makes it almost certain," the officer continued, pursuing his thought. "The servant was waiting that night for his master; they ran together, and Glyder, knowing himself detected, killed the poor fellow either in a quarrel or to shut his mouth, because he knew too many of his master's secrets. This will bring us into the hunt on our own account, and maybe it will turn out one of the affairs in which we can yet teach the Yankees."

Hugh gave due notice that he claimed and would care for the body when the police were done with it, and went his way to the convent. Lady Merton was very much shocked by his news in regard to Pio; but could tell nothing about Glyder's escape; had heard nothing about it, though it would not surprise her to learn he had been proved a bad character. Of herself and her intentions she was indisposed to speak; or of the motive which induced her to abandon husband and home. She appeared very sad and very much cast down; but positively refused to go with Hugh back to the villa.

From the convent he went to see his father and Vivy. He was greatly distressed to find Sir Henry evidently very ill, so ill that his son was not recognised by him. Vivy was pale, had a look of apprehension, appeared to be in one of her "internal conditions," as Hugh called them, evidently forming some scheme. She avoided saying anything about Lady Merton,

except that their papa's wife had a terrible temper, got mad about something, and went off; and that, for her part, she, Vivy, was very glad of it. In regard to Mr. Glyder's departure she gave an imagined and highly coloured account, really knowing nothing but what the servants had told her, which was that two policemen watched at the foot of the stairs all the evening for the Englishman, that he got out of a window and ran away, that their father did not go to bed that night, and the next day was delirious.

Hugh ascertained that the Baronet was not considered dangerously ill by the doctor, and that he had all needful attendance and service from his valet and the other servants; nevertheless, he undertook to send him a trained nurse from Rome. Seeing that he could do nothing more at present, and anxious to be with Nina again, lest she should worry on account of his prolonged absence, he returned to the city. As he reached the Corso Mr. Teller met him, and then for the first time did Hugh learn truly and clearly what had occurred in Sir Henry's apartment the night on which Pio was killed, and in turn he communicated the fact of his father-in-law's fate.

Since the hour, when, with Don Foresti, she re-entered the convent, Mary had been brooding over her most unfortunate case, the ingenious cruelty of the injustice done her, suffering intensely, in a condition of despondency to excite profound pity. Indeed she pitied herself; the stronger part of her compassionated the weaker. She could not yet reason calmly, could make no well-considered plan, could only feel a necessity upon her to do something for her pride's sake, to do something in order to gain an in-

dependent living, and discharge some obligations that she had contracted ; but, as yet, she could not see any way in which to make the attempt. One thing only seemed fixed in her own mind : she should never, under any circumstances or inducements, live again with Sir Henry Merton. And she made known this determination in a note to Don Foresti, written to ask him for advice generally. He replied by letter, and in very courteous but plain language urged the return to her husband.

“ I am aware,” wrote he, “ that to do this, without first receiving an apology and a prayer from him, will be very repugnant to your pride, but remember that pride is not, and that humility and charity are, Christian virtues. Sir Henry is ill, very ill. I saw him yesterday, and he is in the utmost need of you and of your compassion. In his present condition your going back will be a great kindness to him, but infinitely greater to yourself. . . . Let me make of you one more request. Whenever, and as often as you feel resentment coming over you, as it will sometimes, like a flood, go and kneel before the crucifix, think whom and what it represents, and who what it represents was. Then, slowly, attentively, devoutly, say the ‘ Our Father,’ repeating twice the words, ‘ Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us,’ and finally utter from your heart the prayer, ‘ God, be merciful to me, a sinner.’ I beseech you to do this.”

The next morning, after responding to some complaints, questionings, expostulations, Don Foresti added :

“ Try to understand that what has been done to

you, all that you have to endure, was permitted and directed by a most tender and merciful Father, to make you feel, among other things, that here you have no certain shelter, no sure home, no secure rest, even temporary ; no constant and faithful protector, no object on which you may safely fix all your affections ; and that your highest love and confidence must be placed where they cannot be moved or betrayed. Believe me, your husband is more to be pitied than you. Go to him, I entreat. He is still very ill, worse ; he needs your prayers and your forgiveness, but you have greater need to pray for and to forgive him. Offer your pride, the dearest thing you have, to God as a sacrifice. Go to your husband, care for him, take the hireling's place as a nurse by his side. And when recollections revive feelings of indignation, read the last thirteen verses of the eighteenth chapter of St. Matthew, and then lift your heart up to the Judge of all in that prayer, ' Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.' "

What could the poor creature do, badgered as she was in this way by the friend to whom she had been forced, accidentally, as it were, to go for sympathy and counsel, but follow his directions ? He seemed to know her so well !

That evening, after dark, Lady Merton went back to the villa, entered it through the kitchen, went quietly up to her own room, changed the gown she had on for the one she last wore, and then rang for her maid. The girl, startled by this unexpected summons, appeared much excited and greatly pleased to see her mistress again ; said that Sir Henry had been, and was yet, out of his head ; that Vivy had

gone to Rome to stay with Lady Emily, declaring that, since her father was ill, the place was too dull and lonesome for her ; that, besides the nurse, Miss Letterly was with the Baronet, he having insisted that she should be sent for, and that he did not recognise her when she came.

Mary directed the servant to beg of Miss Letterly the favour of a visit, and her request met with ready acquiescence. After many exclamations in a variety of intonations, the visitor continued :

“ Ah, it is dreadful ! I am so glad you have come back. I won't ask you now, dear, certainly you had your reasons. But the responsibility is too great. Poor man ! it is awful ! He is not only delirious, that would be bad enough of itself, and yet not so bad. There would be hope ; he might recover. But now——”

“ What is it ? ” cried Lady Merton, greatly shocked and alarmed.

“ Haven't they told you anything ? He is losing his mind. He—is—really—losing—his—mind.”

“ Does the doctor say so ? ”

“ No, but it is clear. I am certain of it.”

“ How ? ”

“ By what he does.”

“ That is ? ”

“ Only to think of it ! Two or three times every hour, when he is not dozing, he tries to make the sign of the cross ; he, of all men. I would not believe my own eyes at first. Ah, my dear, I pity you ! It is mournful, very mournful ! ”

“ But what does the doctor say ? ”

“ Oh, well, the doctor does not seem to be alarmed.

But that is nothing ; he has always lived among Roman Catholics, and does not understand the symptoms ; he does not know what it indicates among Protestants, and in a man who has always been a Protestant. Ah, it is very sad ! Poor fellow ! He never had any too much mind, and now to lose what he had ! It is very hard for you, my dear, very. I think you should send for an English doctor, a Protestant, who would understand his case. Perhaps, if they could give him something to keep him from making that sign, his mind might be saved, or is it the mind that goes first ? Ah, yes, that is it ; the mind goes before they do anything of that kind. Ah ! my dear ! his mind is already gone !”

“ We must hope for the best,” returned Mary, who did not deeply sympathize with Miss Letterly’s fears and sufferings. “ As for the doctor, the one in attendance has the reputation of being skilful and trustworthy.”

“ At least, my dear, insist on a consultation. Call in to your assistance an Englishman, Protestant or unbeliever, it is all one.”

Lady Merton did not wish to discuss this question, and expressed a desire to see her husband. As she entered his chamber Sir Henry noticed but did not recognise her. In a way that he seemed to think would not be perceived he signed the nurse to come nearer.

“ Who is that ? ” he asked, in a stage whisper.

“ Lady Merton, your wife.”

“ What does she want ? ” all the time regarding Mary askance.

“ She has come to see you.”

"Has she said anything?"

"Not yet." In fact her conflict of feeling was so great that Lady Merton could not trust herself to speak.

"She has told nothing?"

"Nothing."

"Not made any accusations?"

"No."

"What does she want them to do to me? There! there! behind her! Do you not see what are behind her? How they twist and crawl and stare at me! Oh, hiss! hiss! as much as you like; you will not scare a true Englishman."

Mary approached and attempted to take his hand, to put her own on his forehead, to make some soothing caress; but he shrank from, while keeping his eyes, in which was a pitiable look of apprehension, fixed on her face.

Finding that she only troubled her husband, Lady Merton retreated and seated herself out of his sight, as she thought. But he changed his position, cunningly twisting his neck so that, while lying in bed, he could still keep his eyes on her, as though he would guard against a hostile surprise. All this was infinitely painful to Mary, and she was about to leave the room when Sir Henry, attempting to raise himself in bed, suddenly spoke to her.

"I know you hate me—and you have reason. I ought to be hated. And yet—I didn't know—I was deceived—played upon. They lied to me. Glyder is a knave, a rascal, a treacherous scoundrel, a forger, an infamous felon! And Vivy—is she here? No? Well, Vivy, do you know—it was Vivy—and—You

are sure she is not here?—there—behind the curtain, —listening—I saw her there just now—No?—come here—nearer—nearer—I do not want her to hear—She—she told me awful lies about you—and—and I was a fool, a villain—she is trying to kill me now—she is poisoning me—you just watch and you will see—There! there she comes! now you watch.”

Mary was at her wit's end. She did not wish to dispute the patient, and thus dispel the confidence in herself which he now manifested; yet very much desired to soothe, and disabuse him of these harassing fancies. So she took a middle course, seeming to accept as fact all that he said, and trying, as far as possible, to divert his thoughts to other objects. And thus was she installed as her husband's nurse; to this extent, therefore, the priest was satisfied.

XXXIII.

THE next day Mr. Teller called to inquire after Sir Henry, and whether Lady Merton had returned. When told that she was in the house he sent a card to know if he could be received. She at once excused herself. It appeared as though she could not face this friend who had only seen her in prosperity. But before the servant had reached the door she stopped him. "I cannot always refuse to see people, especially those who have been intimate," she thought. "It is better to resume outwardly, ostensibly, so far as possible, the old life, since I am here, and so long as I stay;" and she told the man to say she would be in the drawing-room directly. Mr. Teller appeared exactly as he did the last time they had met, utterly unaware of anything that should embarrass the one or the other. In reply to her questions he gave an account of the identification of Jonathan Wilder in the person of the Hon. Mr. Glyder, laughing heartily at the expense of himself and his American companions in shrewdness and misfortune.

After this visitor's departure Miss Letterly, seeing it was not likely that a Protestant, or at least a non-Catholic doctor would be called to take charge of the Baronet, declared her intention of going back to Rome.

"I cannot support it, you know, my dear," she said to Mary. "Possibly I might bear to see his sufferings, if that were all. But to sit by and watch the mental ruin going on—I cannot endure it, indeed I cannot. I shall be ill myself through sympathy. The torture of it is too strong and too exquisite for me. I am sorry for you, dear ; it is very hard on you ; try to bear up. It is one of those severe duties, or disciplines, that come to us sometimes." And she departed.

Then, while listening and trying to understand and discreetly answer Sir Henry's incoherent speeches, Lady Merton reflected how sorely her husband must have been deceived and tempted by the man Glyder and Vivy, at a time when his health, and particularly his state of mind, made it most difficult for him to detect and resist, and rendered him peculiarly exposed to adverse influences. She recognised the fact that all the doubts, and especially the final conviction of his wife's unworthiness, must have caused him great suffering, greater than her own, perhaps. And, even now, he was clearly conscious of having, in some way, done her an injury. She was particularly pained by his manner of looking at her, as if he feared her ; a peculiar look, like that of a dog which wishes to fawn, yet does not, watching for a blow. And as she thought of his sorrow, his humiliation, and repentance, if a knowledge of all the wrong he had done her should reach his understanding, a kind of divine pity for him filled her heart, and she resolved that, so far as she could prevent it, he should never be made aware of what he had said and done. For she was now convinced he had been in a condition such that

he was unable to measure the reach of his words and actions.

As she pursued this train of reflection she began to feel sharp compunction for the angry and bitter reproaches addressed to him by her, for which she was impatient to ask his forgiveness. In all this she was unconsciously and unintentionally following the suggestions of Don Foresti. "Try to put yourself in your husband's place," he had written. "Consider his provocations, temptations, deceptions, weaknesses. Think how much he must have suffered while this change in your regard was going on in him, and before it was completed; how much he still suffers, and anger will be turned to pity, animosity to benevolence."

Before long Mary perceived that Miss Letterly's observations were correct, for she noticed, with an unexplained feeling of gratitude, that Sir Henry often, after a period of silence, would try to make the sign of the cross above himself. He was so weak, and his hand was so unsteady, its motions so undecided, that the attempt was exaggerated, extravagant; but all the more touching for that. One day he said to her suddenly:

"Why did you go away and kill yourself? I know—I know—I did it. I was a brute, a beast, a devil. But now you have come back. I know you are a spirit—a spirit—like an angel. That is why they are afraid of you. When you are here they all get into that corner—There! don't you see them? There! They dare not come to the bed now. They get on to it, and into it, when you are not here. And they do not hiss, but are mum—mum—when you are

by me. You are so good and compassionate to come, just as you used to be. But oh, why did you kill yourself? Why did you care so much for what I said? I don't know what it was, only I know it drove you away—away—and I waited for you—and I waited—and I waited—But you did not come back. So then I knew you were dead, that I had killed you. And that gave me a turn, and I cannot get righted again. I am turned all the time. Yet one thing I know, I shall go to hell for abusing you and causing your death. They are watching for me, but can't take me till you let them. And the cross—they are afraid of the cross." Here he wildly crossed himself.

To successfully combat all these fancies was more than Lady Merton could do. But she accomplished so much that her husband was most uneasy and wretched if she were absent. It was only humane for her to leave the room when he slept, and she did not unless it was imperatively necessary.

Sleeping little during the night, he generally had some hours of quiet slumber in the morning, and this was the time when Mary went forth to refresh herself. The sadness of it, Sir Henry's condition and her own, together with inevitable reflection, made her desire, compelled her to feel, the want of religious consolation, religious strength, religious life, religion itself, as she had never done before. And when, soon after dawn in the spring mornings, she saw the poor, hungry, wretched going into the churches for early Mass, carrying their troubles and afflictions and sore needs to the foot of the altar, or rather of the cross, as it had come to appear in her mind, her heart would flow out towards them, as if melting with warmth

of charity and brotherly love, while she felt that she ought to go with and belong to them, yet was outside, a stranger, and separated, in the outer cold and darkness. Following, she would kneel behind them, afar off, as one not admitted to their privileged circle, unworthy to approach the shrine at which they knelt. And this was the burden of her prayer: "Lord, I would believe; help Thou mine unbelief. Be Thou my master. Teach me Thy true doctrine. Lead me out of all darkness. Be to me the way, the truth, and the light." Whenever some of these poor people took the communion, as frequently happened, her longing to have their faith and to do like them was inexpressible.

One day the Host was borne in procession from one altar to another. As it approached her she fell on her knees with the others, feeling that Jesus of Nazareth was coming by. When it had passed, she rose and joined those who were following. No longer did it seem to her a ceremony of superstition, but she was with a crowd of poor, common people, following the Lord's Christ, as He had been followed in Judæa more than eighteen hundred and fifty years ago. From her consideration, Protestantism and all its assortment of sects had gone. The whole conflict within her was in relation to the Roman Catholic Church and doctrine. For her, already, no other existed.

And thus, morning after morning, like the Publican, she cried, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner; give me light; lead me;" till one day, obeying an overpowering impulse, she bowed her head low in adoration and exclaimed: "Lord, I do believe! I do be-

lieve!" And instantly, as she said afterwards, in the very moment while she was making a full surrender of her will and her self-sufficiency, submitting utterly, all became clear to her. It was as if a great illumination shone all about her. Full of joy, thankfulness, and humility, she prostrated herself and worshipped.

It seemed as though her perversion were accomplished. For this nothing remained to be done except her formal abjuration of Protestantism, and her admission into the Church of Rome. The restraint that once would have saved her from going to these extremes, namely, that formerly exercised by her husband, was now no safeguard. It had been destroyed by his own acts and words. She could forgive him, pity him, love him ; but she could not look up to him as she once did, could not feel the respect for and confidence in his opinions and judgment. Deference to his principles, prejudices, wishes, caprices, might no longer keep her from acting according to her own convictions. He was no more the keeper of her conscience ; no longer the object of her highest worship.

The only question was this, would the infatuation last till she could take the irrevocable steps?

XXXV.

AT the monastery in the mountains, where the Hon. Mr. Glyder finally found refuge after quitting Albano, strange things had happened during the last few weeks. In the first place, that person had passed the crisis of his fever, and recovered his right mind. In the second, the brothers had so assiduously besieged this stronghold that the devil in possession, perceiving how his operations were now restricted to this fortress, which he confidently considered his against all peradventure, whether he were present or absent, finally surrendered, consenting to march away without the honours of war, but with arms, bag, and baggage, in order to resume his activity in its usual extent. Then the brothers began to clean the place. Shovels and brooms, figuratively speaking, were first employed. But not till the patient had given proofs of sincere repentance, had made a humble, contrite, tearful confession, and asked for the "washing of regeneration," did they complete the cleansing by the application of water.

All this had been done before Glyder, or Wilder, was able to leave his bed, except for an easy-chair a few hours daily. From the time when it was accomplished, so thoroughly had the work been completed, only one earthly desire remained, namely,

to make reparation, or, at least, expiation for his crimes. And this desire, implanted and nourished by the monks, became a feverish anxiety, so that impatience to recover retarded his recovery. But at length the day drew near when, as had been determined, he should leave the monastery to go and deliver himself into the hands of justice, or, rather, of the magistrates. And as a small act of reparation and humility, as well as, according to his notions of fitness, he wished Bill Mundly to have the pleasure of haling him before his judges. Consequently he addressed a letter to Mr. Teller, for Messrs. Mumps and Parley, or either of them, by which they would be informed of his place of abode, and further, if they did not present themselves to claim him, he should on such a day, leave that locality and repair to Rome, in order to constitute himself a prisoner, and so forth.

The monks had provided a horse, which he would ride to the nearest railroad station. But the day appointed for him to set out on his journey was rainy—a most unexpected change in the weather which for weeks had been brilliant. Water fell in torrents; it seemed as if the clouds were melting, and the downfall continued till mid-afternoon. For this reason Glyder's departure was postponed till the morrow, which was a Friday.

Late in the evening a countryman brought to the monastery some fish that he had caught in the river, he said, but they came in fact from the artificial lake, where, taking advantage of the storm, he had angled undiscovered. And now, as a way of adjusting the balance, he had brought some of his catch as a present to the community. He complained that it was very

hard to get any now ; they had all left the stream below the dam. Why ? For fear it might burst and be down on and drown them. What reason to be afraid of this ? Why, anybody with half an eye could see that it was leaking ; the water had made a hole, and, besides, it appeared to bulge. The brothers said the matter ought to have immediate attention, and advised the man at once to acquaint the proper authorities with what he had told. It was too late for any of them to leave the monastery, but the following day they would also speak about it in the right quarter.

The next morning Glyder made his last confession, received his last counsel and encouragement, and took his last communion in the monastery. He had finished breakfast, his horse was at the door, and he was standing ready to mount, surrounded by the brotherhood, who were exchanging with him affectionate farewells, when they were startled by a clap of thunder. Looking behind the building they saw a heavy black cloud hanging low over the mountains, and presently a few big drops of rain fell on them. But, evidently, these were only the fringe of a violent tempest which was expending itself further up the stream. Glyder mounted the horse, and grasped the Superior's hand. What is that ? A sudden, out-breaking roar prolonged, a roar like that of the sea—a roar reaching from earth to heaven, filling space advancing through the air like a host. No ! it is not thunder. The water ! the water ! A water-spout has burst ! The dam is gone ! Oh, heavens ! and the people in the valley !

“ Ah, please God, I will save them ! ” cried Glyder.

‘Behold the opportunity and the work of my expiation. May I dare to think so! God be merciful to them and to me.’

“Amen,” responded those about him, fervently, crossing themselves.

Spurring his horse, Glyder sprang forward down the road that led to the river and by its side through the valley. At the same moment Mr. Tellifer and Messrs. Mumps and Parley, who had come by a footpath from the hamlet, joined the group of monks.

“Who is that?” demanded Mr. Tellifer impetuously, pointing at Glyder flying towards the valley, and without waiting to return the Superior’s dignified salutation,

It had flashed through the three Americans, like a current of electricity, that the felon’s letter was but part of a trick to baffle them, to mock them, to clear the way by decoying them on a fool’s errand into the mountains; that his preparations were all made, he was ready to mount, and when he knew them near, as in this case he might have done by using his eyes, he had taken horse and again escaped. Bill Mundly had prevented an answer to Mr. Tellifer’s question by slapping his hand on his thigh and exclaiming:

“By the mighty pestle and all the powers of quartz! May I be pounded in a stamp-mill——”

‘Nay, my friend!’ interrupted the Superior gravely, judging from the speaker’s appearance and the sound of his words that he was blaspheming fearfully. “That,” he continued, turning to Mr. Tellifer, “is the Hon. Mr. Glyder, of whom you are probably in search. Surely you hear the water; it is coming

along the gorge ; in a few moments you will behold it, a sea uncaged and rushing down the valley like a ravening monster, which nothing can resist. Glyder has undertaken to ride before it and warn the inhabitants. I pray God to be with him !” The old man lifted his eyes reverently, as he said the last words in a voice tremulous with emotion.

“ The old fellow’s head is to let if he believes that,” was Bill Mundly’s remark when Mr. Teller had translated the Superior’s words.

But now the attention of everyone was drawn to the mouth of the gorge, whence issued, as if pushed forward, a great perpendicular wall of water, filling the narrow valley, surging, roaring, foaming, carrying trees, cabins, boulders in a wild whirling and turning and rolling over and over. Glyder was some distance in advance of it, gesticulating, evidently shouting to the people, who were scattered in the fields on both sides of the stream, and who could now be discerned, some running up the steep hillsides, some towards the hamlets, where were their humble treasures and little ones. Like an awful vengeance let loose, the dreadful flood followed the warning messenger. Unhappily, his horse was not swift : he could at first barely preserve the distance between him and the deluge. The excitement and terror on the heights, where the monks and Americans stood, was extreme. With blanched faces, on their knees, the friars were murmuring prayers—prayers for the dying ? Mr. Teller could not hear distinctly enough to ascertain. The rider was growing small by remoteness ; the Superior took a glass which one of the brothers brought him.

"He keeps the interval, but his horse is blown. He lashes him recklessly. If the poor brute fails before—Oh! Holy Madonna! the beast has fallen! Ah! he is up again, and on—on——" The old man handed the glass to Mr. Teller, and wiped away the moisture which a thrilling of nerves, or some other cause, had brought to his eyes. "You see," he remarked in English, "that Mr. Glyder's object was not escape for himself."

"By gosh!" broke out Bill Mundly hotly, "there was a white man in him somewhere, and he's come out. I wouldn't er believed anybody but a cow-boy or a saint would 'av entered fur that ar race."

"'Pears like he'll lose it," quietly responded Mr. Parley in his drawling, unvarying tone, who only manifested excitement by the unusual vigour with which he chewed an enormous quid of tobacco. "Two ter one on the water," he added. "That wont get tired, and ef it goes down so much the better."

"By gosh!" again spoke Mundly. "I'll own up to 't. That was a brave thing ter do, and that is a brave man."

"Yes, yer con bet yer pile on that," assented Mr. Parley.

"And I'll be dog gonod ef I'm not ashamed uv my suspectin' uv him, that he wanted ter run away. He was honest injin this time, and I would like ter take his hand and ask his parding, and say 'Sir, Bill Mundly withdraws his claims. Yer don't owe him nothin' now, and I honours yer, by gosh I *do*.' And ter think thet ef I could 'av got the drop onter him es he rode off I should 'av stopped him in his tracks!" And Bill impatiently dashed some water, which was bothering him in the corner of his eye.

"If he can only reach the open valley!" murmured the Superior. "The roar and the sight of the water will then be warning enough."

All this while Glyder knew that the flood was gaining on him, and that the poor horse's best speed and strength were spent; more than this, that the willing beast might not much longer be able to keep his feet. His breathing was painful to hear, and his going unsteady. He had been urged unmercifully, and now responded to the spur only by a groan. There remained one more hamlet to be warned. It was just beyond the last mountain elbow, and the torrent would be almost upon it before seen. Glyder desperately pushed the failing steed, encouraged with his hands, talked to him.

"For Christ's sake, good beast, for Christ's sake! Let us do it for Christ's sake, for His holy charity. O Jesus, let us do it for Thee! Accept and help us;" and he pressed on, murmuring with upturned look, "For Thy sake, O merciful Jesus, for Thine."

And behind him, like hell broke loose, came the terrible flood. As he glanced back at its foaming front, at that dire, swift pursuing vengeance, in imagination he saw it thronging with all the fiends and monsters of the infernal world, pointing at him, stretching their clawed hands towards him, gnashing on him with their teeth, roaring, snarling, jeering, and laughing with horrible mocking laughter, coming ever nearer and nearer, taunting and tempting him to despair. But only the more fervently did he cry:

"For Christ's sake, good horse! O merciful Jesus, accept our work and help us! In Thee have I put my trust: let me not be confounded everlastingly."

He heard the roar behind him near, still nearer, nearer. He dared no more look back for fear his courage and coolness might be lost in panic. He approaches the turn of the road, he passes the mountain angle, the hamlet is before him, with its people standing and listening in wonder to the unusual and terrible noise. He shouts to them :

“To the hills! to the hills! For your lives! The flood is behind me! Fly! Fly!”

They waited for no more, though not hearing what he said, his action was sufficient for the alarm, and he saw them running for places of safety and never looking back. And just then the beaten horse staggered—staggered a moment and fell forward, partly on his side, and lay still : utterly exhausted or dead. In vain did Glyder strive to rise, his leg was held fast by the animal's whole weight. He shouted for help ; as well have whispered in the growing thunder of the waters. He struggled desperately, looking back to see the huge wave rounding the angle. And then he knew that for him Death was surely riding upon its white crest. In a few seconds it would be upon him. The story of the penitent thief flashed through his mind.

“Lord remember me,” he cried, and a splash of water, like a tongue, smote him in the face, and lapped the air and the words from his throat ; but, getting breath again, he added, “in thy Kingdom,” and the water caught him up with the horse, whirled him over and over, mocked him, hissed horrible laughter in his ears, and bore him on to judgment.

The catastrophe was seen from the monastery height by Mr. Tellifer, who was looking through the glass.

"Ah!" exclaimed he, "it is all over."

"What is it?" asked Mundly.

"He's down——"

"He'll rise——"

"Not till the last day—if there is one." Turning to the monks he continued in Italian :

"Man and horse have fallen and the water rolls over them."

"May God have mercy on his soul!" cried the Superior, solemnly.

"Amen!" responded the friars, crossing themselves. And then arose, devoutly, earnestly chanted, the prayers for the dying; there could be no doubt this time. And amid all this Mr. Tellifer noticed the sweet and happy song of a bird in the neighbouring clump of trees.

"So," said Parley to Bill Mundly, while the pious brothers were engaged in their service, "that ar water's caught him, has it? Wall, it'll keep a tight hold 'thout stoppin' t' identify him, an'll take him ter judgment ter cum a darned sight quicker 'n' surer nor we should, you bet." Observing that Mr. Tellifer and Bill had taken off their hats he did likewise, and kept silence till the voices ceased.

Then Mundly asked Mr. Tellifer to act as his interpreter.

"I don't know much about how yer do things in this part of the world," he said. "I suppose, sometime, they'll find his body, and I should like ter have him decently buried, ter make up fur suspectin' him uv meanness when he started on his last ride. And I want him ter have a good funeral. All this'll cost somethin', so I'll jest leave the money here, an'

ask yer ter see to it an' have it all done." Here he counted out a most liberal sum for the purpose. Then, but with some hesitation, he added : " And, ef yer think it'll do him any good fur yer ter say masses and such like, I wouldn't mind payin' fur them too." And he counted out another sum. " Fact is, Wilder 'n' me used ter be friens. Many's the good time 'n the good drink we've had tergether. An' he's cum ter his death doin' a dog-goned plucky thing, and a thing that only a white man would do, and not many uv them ; an' there was no frien' near him : so I wants old scores ter be rubbed out. An' now, Parley," he continued, turning to that person, " I calkerlate our missionary work is done. I reckon we haint nothin' more ter do on the continent uv Europe, and I guess we'll go home."

XXXVI.

VIVY to Sir Henry Merton. (Extract.)
..... "I heard you had taken Lady Merton back, and, after all that has occurred, it would have been most unpleasant, indeed quite intolerable, for me to live in the same house with her. So I decided to accept a home in the palace of my husband, to whom I was married last evening, quite privately, but legally and strongly. He has not much ready money, as his property consists of the ancestral estate, palace, park, pictures, tapestries, furniture, carriages, horses, stables, and heirlooms. He is Prince Buondelmontedoro of Mantua, and is very handsome. We shall not go there at once, but make our wedding trip to Naples and other places, leaving here this afternoon. My Buondelmontedoro is fearfully proud, and refuses to go to you. He says you must first see him at his ancestral home, where you will feel a respect for him impossible in another place. Therefore please send your presents, and my dot, and the first instalment of the allowance, which I hope you will make as large as possible, to me, Princess Buondelmontedoro, Grand Hôtel Royal des Etrangers, Naples." . . .

Sir Henry Merton to Mr. Tellerer :—

"My dear Tellerer,—It is with feelings of sincerest gratitude that I seat myself to write you this letter.

And I know it will give you great pleasure. At the least you will have the gratification of a man who in arguing is victorious, and, probably, also the satisfaction which you feel when seeing persons reasoning and acting with logical consistency. Know then that, thanks to your arguments and your expositions of Catholic faith, I have become a convert. In the severe illness which I had when you left Rome, my mind had some uncommonly near and clear views of Truth. In the first place, the solemn certainty that death might come to and for me at any moment never before appeared so actual, so imminent a fact ; for, during a whole week, in my right mind, I expected that each day and each night would be my last. And I was afraid. Terror took hold of me. I perceived then that, though I had been a prejudiced religious partisan, I had never been a religious man ; that all I had of religion was the pride, and animosity, of a religious sectarian. The fear and the terror paralysed my pride, and silenced my prejudices. I felt it to be infinitely more important to have the approbation of my Maker and my Judge than of the whole British nation, with the Royalty at its head. And, just when I was in this condition of defenceless candour, your arguments, expositions, and illustrations came rushing back upon my mind, as if you were there yourself repeating and emphasising them.

“Part of the decorations in my room was the ‘Pater Noster’ and the ‘Ave Maria,’ printed in large type, and hung in frames opposite where I lay. I said them one after the other, said them fervently, many times a day. I asked for faith, asked to be taught the truth, with my mind disabused of preju-

dice and pride, especially the stupidly proud and obstinate confidence in the infallibility of my understanding, humbly feeling that I knew and could, by myself, know nothing, clearly, of the Divine mysteries. With heart and intelligence really open and willing to accept verity, whatever it might be, and however it might appear, I asked for light and guidance, and the more I asked the more earnest and solicitous I became, and the wider and stronger grew my incipient belief.

“When well enough I sent for our good friend Don Foresti, and asked him to instruct me. He gave me Father Bruno’s ‘Catholic Belief,’ and the ‘Golden Manuel,’ and he explained to me what was difficult, and enlightened my darkness. In short, I myself became a convert, or pervert, and through you, who were chosen for my teacher, because, perhaps, I would listen to no other. I should certainly think this, if modesty and humility did not forbid.

“And then I began to be anxious about my darling wife, who, like the angel that she is, had forgiven me my atrocious sins against her. I was almost afraid to speak of my change, lest it should turn her from me. But I did speak, and judge of my emotion when I learned that she was waiting for me to go with her into the Holy Catholic Church. We came into it hand in hand, like little children. And here we are at peace, at rest, doubting and questioning no longer; possessing happiness in the Church and in each other that it is impossible to describe; and daily offering our prayers, singly and unitedly, that you, dear friend, to whom, under God, we owe all this joy and gladness, may have grace to believe and come

to us, and share our perfect contentment and thankfulness. Yours faithfully, with unfailing gratitude,
H. M.

“P.S.—I have just been greatly disturbed and disgusted by a letter received from my daughter Vivy. I enclose it, and beg, as you are in that neighbourhood, you will ascertain for me, if possible, all about this Buondelmontedoro. Pocus, whom doubtless you remember, as you disliked him so much, took occasion during my illness to carry himself and the fruit of his swindling out of Italy. Rome and his creditors, of whom, I am sorry to say, the writer of this is one, know him no more.”

Lady Merton to Mr. Tellifer. (Extract.)

“ The news of your mother's death was like the announcement of a sorrow personal to ourselves, so truly and thoroughly are we knit to you by gratitude and affection. I yearn to offer you support and consolation, and it is impossible for me to give you any other proof of my warmest sympathy, my sincerest friendship, my longing to bear your burden with and for you, so great as is the constant fervent wish and prayer that, after directing me to it, you yourself, receiving faith to believe the Gospel, may enter and enjoy in the Catholic Church all its treasures of solace, hope, peace, and, even in deepest affliction, great joy in believing. Ah! if you only would admit faith; if you only would become as a little child, if you would lay aside your adult pride! Be yourself candid in listening to the pleadings of faith, as you would have others when hearing the arguments of reason.

“You grant that the evidence of design, and the

adaptation of means to ends, in infinite perfection, convince you that creation is the work of a wise Maker. If wise, He made this infinite variety for some purpose, and not simply for the embodiment of a caprice, to be abandoned when finished. You would admit, also, that He created it for Himself, and for no one else, certainly not for an enemy ; and that, having done so, He designed to carry out his purpose, perfect it, purging and proving His work in His own way, and preserving for His enjoyment that which stands the test. Now is not this, with some hints as to His way, what we find in revelation ? How, then, is it so hard to believe the Bible ? And as for the Catholic Church, how well you reasoned, and, though outside of it, how correct your conception !

“ I remember that someone, who, like me, was converted after youth had passed away, has said : ‘ No one standing outside and looking at the walls of the Catholic Church can perceive and understand much about it. But once inside, after examining, in the light shining from its altar, its doctrines and the precepts and wisdom that has been accumulating for nearly two thousand years, he will exclaim : How beautiful thy gates, oh Jerusalem ! ’

“ Notwithstanding their beauty within, which I have seen, these gates without, where I have also seen them, appear forbidding, narrow, and low ; so low that no man can pass through them with head proudly erect, like a triumphing besieger. Who would enter must bend, and the taller he is the more must he bow, even to his knees, even till his forehead touch the ground, submission, not triumph, in his heart ; humility, not pride. And so shall he ‘ take it by force. ’

"Pardon me. Like the woman I am I have let my absorbing thought run away with me. Wishing to tell you how fully we share your inexpressible sorrow, my solicitude for you has led me further than I was aware. Knowing where you can find consolation as nowhere else, I yearn to point the way to it and serve you as you served us. Attribute what I have said to this desire, and not to over or intemperate zeal, I beg."

Miss Letterly to Mr. Tellifer. (Extract.)

". What do you think! They have both gone and done it! Together they went to the Inquisition, voluntarily, and received the mark of the beast. I knew Sir Henry's mind was going. I said so some time ago. But I didn't even suspect that hers was. It is one of the saddest cases I ever knew or heard of. And to think that the law makes no provision, and will take no notice!

"It now appears her mental malady was anterior to his, but, with the cunning that generally accompanies such disorders, she concealed her condition even from me. The crowning act, the act which proves the completeness of the catastrophe, the absolute intellectual ruin, its utter hopelessness and irremediableness was consummated last Sunday, when both of them, at the so-called Holy Office, that is the terrible Inquisition, as I have said, were confirmed members of the Roman Catholic Church, that is, were made confirmed Papists. I could weep tears of impotent blood.

"At first I would not believe the report, and went to see her. And do you know, the poor creature had no shame in confessing it, but did so with a smile no

her face ! And then she said very gently, with a sweet, simple, touching, insane candour—oh, it was so touching to see the poor thing so wandering, so mentally ruined, conscious and yet not conscious of her dreadful affliction :

“ I am so happy, so grateful that my wisdom was taken away, and that I became a fool—that I was brought to the condition of a babe and suckling, desiring the sincere milk of the word. I can never be thankful enough, never enough praise and bless the infinite Mercy. And every day, every hour my wonder, gratitude, and love increase. Pride was my master. It kept me away from Him and from His true Church till in tenderest compassion He crushed and destroyed it utterly. Oh, it is so good for me that I have been humiliated ! ’

“ And then you should have seen and heard her, so simple, candid, and natural, make the most unnatural and astounding speeches, utterly unaware of their enormity. For instance, one day she said that she preferred to kneel in worship, and to take the communion in the midst of the poorest and most ill-clad people ; a thing that no modern Christian in his right mind could possibly have said or even thought. And then she remarked that these were such as followed Christ when He was on earth, and such as He loved ; all the time looking so sweet and humble, as if she were saying nothing extraordinary. To hear her go on in this way ! Poor thing ! poor thing ! If you could have listened, as I did, I think you would have been quite broken up. Certainly you would have exclaimed in the words of holy writ, ‘ The pity of it, I argue ; the pity of it. ’ And all the more affecting is

her madness, or, rather, loss of mind, for she seems too mild to be mad—her foolishness, she herself calls it, and insane people often hit the truth—because it does not appear, and never would be suspected, had she not given indubitable proof of it by her perversion to Roman Catholicism, and by the meekness, I would rather say tameness, of her spirit since that event. Physically she is well, never better, and never before so exquisitely, so wonderfully, so supernaturally beautiful.

“It will be very hard on me to cease my intimate relations with them, and to treat them as though they had not lost their minds, and were responsible for their acts. I shall be obliged to use them as if they had committed some utterly disgraceful crime, which had put them entirely out of the pale of relationship, friendship, and social respect; or had taken some offensive liberty without my permission. And I shall be obliged to do this, notwithstanding the fact that, having become imbecile, it would seem that they ought not to be held accountable for their deeds, as certainly they would not be civilly. It will be particularly painful to avoid their society, to show them that aversion and spiteful superiority and repellent sourness and social neglect, and to feel for them that degree of simmering hatred, proper and necessary under the circumstances. This, unfortunately, is all that I can do, since I have no really good persecuting hold on them. Ah! if I only had! It would give me a kind of divine enjoyment to lacerate my bowels harassing them.

“If I would retain my self-respect, as a good Protestant, I must do the best I can. And I will come to it gradually, sustained by the consciousness

that this course of action has also the merit of self-denial. For, you know, Protestants are not obliged by their principles to be intolerant. Therefore, voluntarily denying themselves the pleasure and peace of toleration, they secure the great merit of self-denial, together with the charitable joy of vindictiveness.

"And this brings me to notice one of the fundamental differences in the two religions, namely: Protestant intolerance is a most holy, wholesome, and charitable virtue, while Catholic intolerance is a vice of hate, generated in and smelling of hell, another proof of the damnable errors of popery, and the purifying effects of the Reformation."

Mr. Teller to Sir Henry Merton. (Extract.)

" With the help of the police, and its records, I have looked into the facts relative to your daughter's husband, and find that his real name is not, and never has been, Buondelmontedoro, but is simply and vulgarly Pietro Meschini; that he has no title, except the one given him by common consent, in virtue of his merits, which is *chevalier d'industrie*; that at one time he had something to do in an office where tickets of the State lottery were sold, but was discharged for dishonesty; that so far as known, he has never had any other regular occupation or profession; and that he is an object of special interest to the police. It is hardly necessary to add that he owns neither estate, nor palace, nor park, nor home of any kind; that his pictures are, or ought to be, in the rogue's gallery; and that his only heirloom which was ever of value is a piece of the rope with which his father was hung."

Mr. Tellifer to Hugh Merton, Esq. (Extract.)

“ Ever since I had the pleasure of being one of your witnesses at the civil marriage by which you wished to bind yourself legally to your young and lovely wife, I have been bothered with a notion, and I came here to look into it. From what I had seen of madame and her father I could not help thinking that they must be of noble extraction, and that Pio della Montagna might have had the right to bear a title. Well, to be brief, I have legal proofs of the fact, and legal authority for your wife to bear a very ancient title of marchioness. This is my wedding present, coming a little late, but, I trust, not entirely unwelcome on that account. It will, I hope, be a gratification to your father and Lady Merton, and, as it were, a reward for so amiably and magnanimously receiving *La Signora Marchesa* as a daughter, when they supposed she had nothing but beauty and goodness to recommend her.”

Mr. Tellifer to Lady Merton. (Extract.)

“ The death of the saintliest, tenderest, most lovely and most loving of mothers has turned my thoughts towards the future, and I have been looking into it. It was dark, very dark, and I wanted a light. What has become of that angelic being? What of all her sweetness, her piety, her reverence, her faith, her charity? Have all her tenderness, all her love, all her sparkling wit, all her brilliant reason vanished, evaporated, been annihilated with her physical beauty? Is she lost to me for ever, past all possibility of being found or encountered—for ever? Ah, that is a long time! I did not want to believe this—yet I was certain of nothing else,

could see clearly nothing else, unless—unless I used the light of revelation. And I do admit, nay, I avow and confess to you frankly, that what you had said to me, coupled with two facts, induced me to avail myself of that light, to make it my guide henceforth and for ever.

“I do believe in the revelation given to us in the Bible. The great facts to which I alluded are the conversion of Sir Henry to Roman Catholicism, and the change wrought in Glyder, or Wilder, or whatever his name, by which that arrant rascal received the spirit of a missionary and a martyr. If these facts do not prove the existence of special, miracle-working grace, nothing can be proved, for that only could have conquered the Baronet’s prejudices and his pride as a member of the Anglican Establishment, and brought about the miraculous alteration in a thief and murderer. And now, of course, I admit all the premises which I formerly denied. Pray for me. In a few days I shall be on my way to Rome, there to ask admission to the church of Peter and of all the Apostles.”





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